

**REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF STREET
CONNECTED CHILDREN IN PUNE
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (PMC) AND
PIMPRI CHINCHWAD MUNICIPAL
CORPORATION (PCMC) AREAS**

PREPARED FOR

EDUCO AND SATHI

BY

KAMINI KAPADIA

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PROJECT TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS

Researcher and Author:

Kamini Kapadia, Retired Faculty (TISS) and Development Sector Consultant

Collaborating Partners: Educo and SATHI

Guruprasad Rao, Country Director, Educo India

Sukanta Chandra Behera, Program Manager, Educo India

Basavaraj Shali, Secretary-cum-Executive Director, SATHI

Jayanta Patra, Program Manager, SATHI

Rajveer Singh, Project Coordinator, SATHI

Other SATHI Project team members from Pune

Data Collection from Open Shelters (2): Rajashri Tikhe, Freelancing Consultant

Participants representing Government:

Deputy Commissioner, DWCD

Assistant Commissioner, DWCD

DWCDO

Child Helpline Coordinator

CWC1 and CWC2 Chairpersons and Members

Assistant Commissioner, Labour Department

Assistant Police Inspector, Pimpri Police Station

Participating NGOs:

Members of ARC Network

Sunita, Coordinator, Sarva Seva Sangh

Participating Community Representatives:

Parents and Children from various communities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section No.	Title	Page No.
	Executive Summary of the Project	4
	List of Abbreviations	7
I	BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	
1	Contextual Understanding of the Issues related to Street Connected Children	8
2	Introduction	11
II	DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY	12
1	Overall Goal of the Study	12
2	Specific Objectives	12
3	Key Principles Guiding the Recommendations of the Study	12
4	Important Definitions Pertaining to the Study	12
5	Geographical Coverage	13
6	The Pune Context	13
7	Studies Estimating the Number of Street Connected Children in PMC and PCMC	14
8	Details of the Project Plan	15
9	Methodology	16
10	Research Questions	17
11	Details regarding Data Collection with Participation of Stakeholders	17
12	Project Timeline	21
13	Limitations of the Study	21
III	STUDY FINDINGS	22
1	Conceptual Understanding of Street Connected Children	22
2	Contributing Factors leading to the Phenomenon of Street Connected Children	24
3	Approaches to Working with Street Connected Children	27
4	Estimating the Number of Street Children Requiring Support	29
5	Critical Analysis of Policies and Programmes Specifically related to Street Connected Children	30
6	Understanding the Role of Various Stakeholders through Interviews/ FGDs with them	38
7	Hotspots of Street Connected Children in PMC and PCMC	72
8	Constraints and Challenges while Working with Street Connected Children	75
IV	CONCLUSION	77

Executive Summary of the Project

Street-connected children in India are among the most marginalized, deprived of basic rights such as education, healthcare, and protection. In Pune and PCMC, rapid urbanization, migration, and poverty have forced thousands of children into precarious street-based lives. Despite strong constitutional provisions and laws, implementation gaps persist.

Globally, frameworks like the **UNCRC (1989)** and **UN Alternate Care Guidelines (2010)** emphasize family- and community-based care, with institutionalization as a last resort. Nationally, laws such as the **Juvenile Justice Act**, **Right to Education Act**, **Child Labour Act**, **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** and **POCSO Act** provide safeguards. Yet, children continue to face cycles of neglect, exploitation, and abuse.

The study is aimed to generate evidence on the situation, needs, service gaps, and coordination mechanisms for street-connected children in Pune, to inform policy and programmatic action. Specific objectives included:

- Analysing policies, programmes, and stakeholder roles.
- Understanding contributing factors affecting children and families.
- Mapping high-risk areas and estimating populations.
- Recommending coordinated plan for policy and action.

A **multi-stakeholder approach** was adopted, combining primary and secondary data.

- **Primary data:** Interviews and FGDs with children, families, NGOs, CWCs, shelters, labour officials, police, and government departments.
- **Secondary data:** Census surveys, prior studies (e.g., PMC 2016 census, Tribhuvan et al. 2019–20), and official records.
- **Coverage:** Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).
- **Definitions:** Children categorized as living alone, working on streets, or living with families on streets.

Common Hotspots & Activities of Children

- **Common Locations:** Railway stations, bus stands, temples, flyovers, construction sites, slum areas.
- **Ward-wise Distribution:**
 - PMC: Dhankawadi, Shivajinagar, Bibwewadi highest concentrations.
 - PCMC: Sangvi, Bhosari, Phugewadi zones most affected.
- **Common Activities:** Begging, vending, rag-picking, construction work, domestic work, sexually exploited girls and children of sex workers.

Primary Data Collection from Stakeholders:

1. **Government Agencies:** DWCD Officials, Child Helpline Coordinator, Police Officer, Labour Department and Members of two CWCs
2. **NGOs:** A detailed study of two of the three Open shelters for street connected children in Pune: One for boys and the other for Girls, Visits to two community centres in Pimpri Chinchwad run by SATHI in partnership with EDUCO, which included interaction with children attending the centres, their families, centre-based workers as well as person in charge of the centres, FGD with about 25 members of ARC, a well-established network on child Rights in Pune, Interview with Coordinator of Sarva Seva Sangh having extensive family and Community Based interventions in Pune

Challenges reported by stakeholder Participants

- **Field-level:** Poverty, migration, parental attitudes, reluctance of schools/Anganwadis, poor adjustment of tribal children in CCIs, abuse during evictions.
- **Institutional:** Staff shortages, diluted focus under Mission Vatsalya, closure of Childline, weak monitoring, limited police involvement.
- **Special Needs:** Substance addiction among boys, gaming/pornography risks, severe vulnerabilities of girls (trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation).
- **Data & MIS:** Lack of access to TrackChild portal, weak baselines, poor monitoring of SDG indicators.

Recommendations for Coordinated Action

Aligned with **SDGs** and **Social Protection Floors**, the study recommends:

- **Enhance Social Protection:** Relax documentation norms for migrant children; ensure access to ration cards, housing, shelters, and interstate migration support.
- **Strengthen Child Protection Policies:** Revive open shelters as flexible, community-based safe spaces; fill DCPU vacancies; expand foster care and sponsorship; decentralize helpline services.
- **Special Needs Care:** Establish de-addiction centres and camps; address gaming and online risks; targeted programmes for girls against violence, trafficking, and child marriage.
- **Community-Based Prevention:** Sustain *Phirte Pathak* mobile units; set up community learning centres; run awareness campaigns to reduce stigma.
- **Evidence & MIS:** Build robust baselines; make TrackChild accessible; improve SDG-linked reporting.
- **Education & Skills:** Flexible, inclusive schooling for migrants; bridge courses and vocational training through community centres.
- **Partnerships & Governance:** Strengthen NGO-government collaboration; ensure inter-sectoral coordination.

- **Law & Protection:** Develop SOPs for police; provide tailored support for children in conflict with law.

Conclusion

The study underscores the urgent need for **coordinated, evidence-based, child-centred interventions** in PMC and PCMC locations. By combining global frameworks, national laws, local realities, and stakeholder insights, it calls for a **multi-sectoral, rights-based approach** that strengthens families, empowers children, and restores community-based protection.

List of Abbreviations

ARC	Action on the Rights of the child
CCIs	Child Care Institutions
CCL	Children in Conflict with Law
CWCs	Child Welfare Committees
DCPO	District Child Protection Officer
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
DWCDO	District Women and Child Welfare Officer
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Services Scheme
ILO	International Labour Organization
JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
MIS	Management Information System
MV	Mission Vatsalya
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PCMC	Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation
PMC	Pune Municipal Corporation
POCSO	The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act
SATHI	Society for Assistance to Children in Difficult Situations
SCPS	State Child Protection Societies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Units
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Report on the Situation of Street Connected Children in Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) Areas

April 2026

Prepared for EDUCO and SATHI

By

Kamini Kapadia¹

I: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY:

1. Contextual Understanding of Issues related to Street Connected Children

1.1 Introduction

Street connected children in India represent one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, often living in dire conditions without access to basic human rights such as education, healthcare, and protection from exploitation. Street connected children are mainly those who rely on urban streets for survival without adequate parental or guardian care. They face severe vulnerabilities including homelessness, malnutrition, exposure to violence, and limited access to basic services. Despite a robust legal framework and various government and NGO-led initiatives, implementation gaps continue to hinder meaningful change. India has **over 11 million children** living and working on the streets, driven by poverty, inequity, rapid urbanization, and forced migration².

Once on the streets, children fall into cycles of **poverty, crime, neglect, and abuse** including **health issues, physical and sexual violence, and intimidation**. Most common activities observed through researches conducted are: manual labour, begging, street performances, drug dealing, etc. These activities are often done at the instance of exploiters, generally known to children.

1.2 Global Perspective to Address the Issue of Street Connected Children:

All the provisions highlighted in different international documents **follow the ecological perspective**, highlighting the importance of family, community as well as Governments to address the issue of street connected children. One thing common is the **precedence of family and community centred programmes, with institutional care as the last resort**.

¹ Retired Faculty (TISS) and Development Sector Consultant

² The UNICEF–KPMG study on *Children in Street Situations in India* (2023)

The UNCRC (1989)³ is the backbone of all instruments for the rights of children and has been ratified by all State Governments apart from the United States of America and Somalia. Most of the standards worked out by the various countries follow these rights. The rights outlined in the UNCRC which are relevant to child protection include:

Article 9 – Parental care and non-separation: The right to live with parents unless this is deemed incompatible with the child's best interests; the right to maintain contact with both parents if they are separated.

Article 10 – Family reunification: The right to leave or enter any country for family reunification and to maintain contact with both parents.

Article 12 – The child's opinion: The right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.

Article 18 – Parental responsibility: Parents have joint responsibility for the upbringing of their children and the State shall support them in this. The State shall provide appropriate assistance to parents in their child rearing.

Article 19 – Protection from abuse and neglect: The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

Article 20 – Children without families: The right to receive special protection and assistance from the State when deprived of a family environment and to be provided with alternative care, such as foster placement or *Kafala* in Islamic societies, adoption or an institutional placement.

Article 25 – Periodic review: The right of children placed by the State for reasons of care, protection or treatment to have all aspects of that placement reviewed regularly.

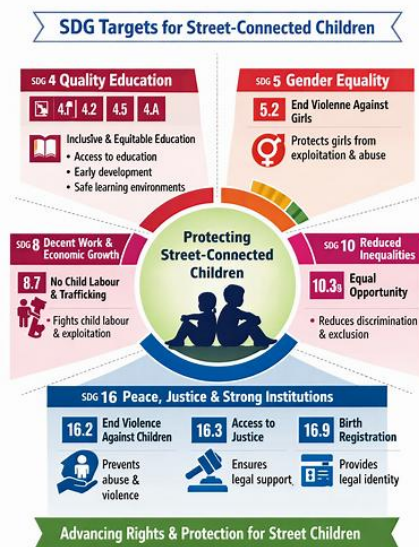
The principles highlighted in the **UN Alternate Care Guidelines (United Nations, 2010)**⁴, maintaining the right to family are as follows:

- The child shall be treated with dignity and worth.
- In the best interest of the child, all measures shall be taken to ensure the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and moral development of the girls in residential care so as to ensure the safety, well-being and permanence for each child and thus enable each child to survive and reach his or her full potential.
- The primary responsibility of bringing up children, providing care, support and protection shall be with the biological parents.
- With safety in consideration, no child shall experience harm, abuse, neglect, exploitation and maltreatment.
- No stigmatising semantics, decisions and actions pertaining to the child in care shall be taken.

³ UNCRC Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, General Assembly resolution. 2011
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.html>

⁴ United Nations. (2010) .Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly. [http://www.iss-ssi.org/2009/assets/files/guidelines/Guidelines English.pdf](http://www.iss-ssi.org/2009/assets/files/guidelines/Guidelines%20English.pdf)

- No child shall be discriminated on the basis of age, sex, place of birth, disability, health, status, race, ethnicity, religion, caste, cultural practices, work, activity or behaviour of the child or that of his parents or guardians, or the civil and political status. Equality of access, equality of opportunity and equality in treatment shall be guaranteed to every child in residential care.
- Institutionalization of a child shall be the last resort after reasonable inquiry and that too for the minimum possible duration.
- For the purpose of promoting the well-being of the child, positive measures shall be taken for the full mobilisation of all possible resources.
- Every child in residential care has the right to be reunited with his family and restored to the same socioeconomic and cultural status that the child enjoyed before coming to residential care or becoming vulnerable to any form of neglect, abuse or exploitation.
- Any child, who has lost contact with his family, shall be eligible for protection under the residential care home and shall be repatriated and restored, at the earliest, to his family, unless such repatriation and restoration is likely to be against the best interest of the child.



The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Decade of Action (2020–2030)** provide an opportunity to address the extreme vulnerabilities of these children. Although the 2030 Agenda lacks specific targets related to street connected children – further underscoring the heightened vulnerability of these children, several SDG targets directly contribute to the protection and promotion of the rights of children in street situations. Specifically, targets relating to education (4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4A), gender equality (5.2), child labour and trafficking (8.7), reduced inequality (10.3), and violence against children (16.2), birth registration (16.9), access to justice (16.3), all contribute to addressing the situation.

1.3. National Commitments related to Street Connected Children:

Constitutional Provisions related to street children are:

- **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty, including food, shelter, and healthcare.
- **Article 21A:** Free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14.
- **Article 24:** Prohibition of child labour in hazardous industries.
- **Article 39(f):** Protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and abandonment.

1.4 Highlights of Key Legislations:

- **Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act of 2000 Amended in 2015:** Care, protection, and rehabilitation through CWCs, foster care, adoption.
- **Right to Education Act, 2009:** Free education for children aged 6–14, but many excluded due to lack of documents.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016:** Bans child labour under 14, but loopholes remain in family-run businesses.
- **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006);** “Child” here is a male, who has not completed twenty-one years of age, and a female, has not completed eighteen years of age;
- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012):** Enacted to safeguard children from sexual assault, sexual harassment, and exploitation through pornography

2. Introduction to the Study:

Street connected children face risks linked to rapid urbanization, migration, informal work, family breakdown, exploitation, and gaps in protection services. Responses to vulnerabilities and issues faced by street connected children phenomenon have evolved in the light of changing realities of the socio-economic and cultural context, combined with the international and national commitments as well as civil society interventions. **Taking Pune District as a case, the present study examines the situation of street connected children in the light of all these factors. The study has been done in two geographical locations of Urban Pune, viz. PMC and PCMC.**

Studies across geographical locations (especially urban), have thrown light on estimates of the numbers of street connected children, identification of hotspots for facilitating interventions as well as causes and consequences of the street connected children. In Pune itself where this study has focused, findings of studies done earlier are available. **What makes the present study distinctive is its comprehensive scope. It not only builds on previous findings but also integrates theoretical perspectives, policy analysis, and intervention-oriented approaches.** The study offers:

- A detailed examination of definitions provided by international and national bodies for conceptual clarity on the subject.
- An exploration of emerging causes and consequences affecting street-connected children in the given locations.
- Documentation of approaches and interventions currently in practice.
- A thorough review of policies and programmes, including their strengths and gaps.
- Analysis of available findings on estimation, hotspots and spatial distribution patterns within Pune.
- Assessment of stakeholder roles, along with the challenges they face.

The findings culminate into recommendations to facilitate a coordinated plan of action, informed by both primary data collection and extensive secondary analysis.

Together, these insights provide a holistic understanding of the situation of street-connected children and pathways for meaningful intervention.

II. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

1. Overall goal of the Study:

To generate evidence on the situation, needs, service gaps, and coordination mechanisms related to street-connected children in Pune, in order to inform policy and programmatic action.

2. Specific objectives:

The project aims to:

1. **Understand and critically analyse the programmes policies and approaches** to addressing the issues faced by street connected children as well as the role of various stakeholders in identifying, supporting and rehabilitating these children and to understand coordination among them
2. Develop a holistic understanding of **contributing factors and issues** faced by the street connected children and their families in the project areas
3. **Identify and map high risk areas and estimated population of street connected children** in the PMC and PMC areas
4. **Make recommendations for a coordinated plan for an informed policy and programmatic action**

3. Key Principles guiding the recommendations made by the study:

- **Child-Centred Approach:** Best interest of the child is paramount.
- **Gendered Approach required to address the issues of street connected children**
- **Non-Discrimination:** Equal treatment regardless of caste, gender, religion, or background.
- **Confidentiality & Dignity:** Respecting privacy and protecting identity.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration between government, civil society, corporate sector, and communities.
- **Continuum of Care:** Institutionalization only as a last resort; priority on family and community-based solutions.

4. Important definitions pertaining to the study:

The detailed definition of street connected children adopted in the study as (Ref: UNICEF KPMG study (2023)):

- **Category 1:** Children living alone on the streets: children who have run away from their families and live alone on the streets.

- **Category 2:** Children working on the streets: children who spend most of their time on the streets, fending for themselves, but return home regularly.
- **Category 3:** Children whose families are on the streets: children who live on the streets with their families

Other definitions of terms used in the report are:

Spatial distribution: This describes Geographical spread within the PMC and PCMC

Hotspots: Hotspot is an area where five or more children are working together (PMC report, 2016) Public places such as bus stops, every signal, under the bridge, railway stations, outside of the temple, flyover, outside of companies. There are also high-density clusters in transport hubs and public spaces.

5. Geographical Coverage:

The study has covered the two urban conglomerations of Pune, viz. PMC and PCMC.

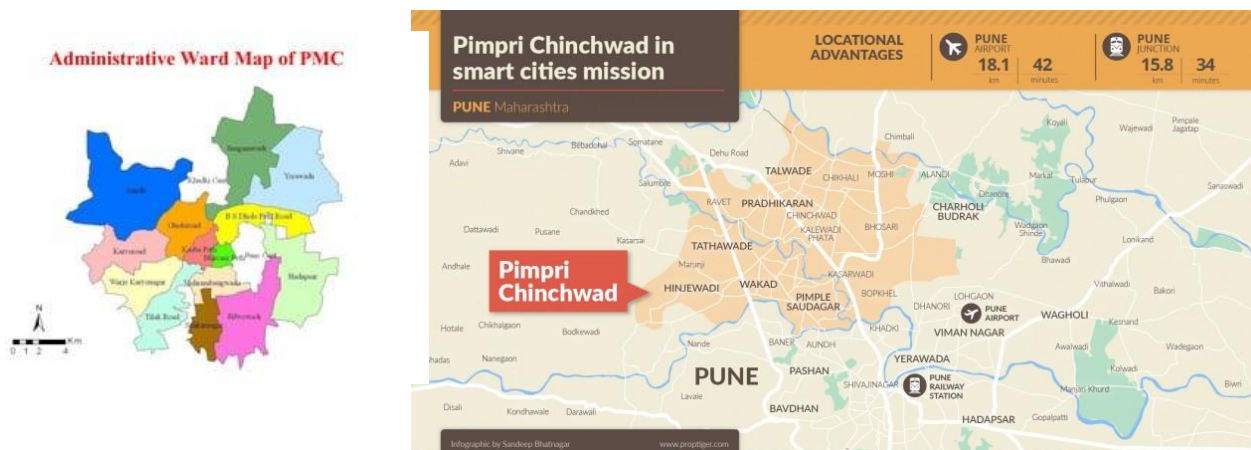
6. The Pune Context

Pune district has 15 talukas viz. Haveli, Khed, Ambegon, Junnar, Shirur, Daund, Indapur, Baramati, Purandhar, Bhore, Velhe, Mulshi and Maval, and two city based Municipal Corporations. **The present study includes the two Municipal Corporations: Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) as well as Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).**

Pune city is the cultural capital of Maharashtra and one of the smart cities in India. PMC along with PCMC is a highly developed IT hub, having an educational institute and many more job opportunities that's why the large scale of people migrated towards the Pune city due to survival and street people is also one of them.

In 2011, Pune had a population of 9,429,408, of which male and female were 4,924,105 and 4,505,303, respectively. Pune District's population constituted 8.39 percent of the total Maharashtra population.

Pune, a rapidly growing industrial hub, attracts a significant influx of unskilled and semi-skilled migrant labourers and their families, primarily from marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Due to the lack of affordable housing and decent livelihood opportunities, many of these families are forced to live in informal settlements, footpaths, near railway tracks, or in overcrowded slums. This precarious living situation exposes their children—especially girls—to serious rights violations and risks, including child labour, begging, trafficking, substance abuse, and physical or sexual exploitation.



7. Studies Estimating the Number of Street Connected Children in PMC and PCMC

According to the Children in street situations, (PMC's 2016 report), there were altogether 10,427 street children in Pune city. Apart from this, there were two latest study findings available, the first being a study on "Spatial Distribution of Street Children in Pune City" done in 2019-20 by Tribhuvan K, et al (2023) and the other one was identification of high-risk street connected cases by SATHI (2025)⁵.

Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) in collaboration with Rainbow Foundation India (RFI)⁶, other NGOs and civil society individuals conducted **the census survey of children in street situations in Pune city covering all the 76 electoral wards and 2 cantonments in the Pune Municipal Corporation area**. A stratified three-stage sampling design was used to capture the relevant information. The first stage being the census enumeration using a census questionnaire along with basic information and demographic characteristics of the street children. This was followed by a detailed survey of the sample of street children to elicit information on their socio-economic conditions, stay, schooling, water and sanitation, food, illness and disability, earning and spending, abuse and assistance. Further, focus group discussions captured multiple perspectives and depict the situation of major occupational and migrant groups based on the census findings and specific vulnerability mapping. **A total of 10,427 children were enumerated across the 76 wards and 2 cantonments during the time of enumeration. This accounts for 0.34 percent of the total population of the city. Among all street children surveyed, 58.1 percent were boys, 41.7 percent girls and 0.3 percent transgender. An overwhelming 83 percent (8550) of the children belonged to street living families. Among the street children covered in the survey, about 50 percent (5207) of**

⁵ Unpublished

⁶ Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) in collaboration with Rainbow Foundation India (RFI), (2017), Children in Street Situations: Life on Pune Streets.

children were in the 6 to 14 years age group. As many as 60 percent of surveyed children were not studying. The poorest children of different parts of the State of Maharashtra migrated to the Pune city in search of job and livelihood. It was found that about 48 percent of Children or their families migrated from the districts such as, Usmanabad, Latur, Beed, Parbhani, and Solapur in Maharashtra. Almost 82 percent of these children or their families migrated in search of job and income. The survey revealed that street connected children involved in a wide variety of income-generation activities. Of the total children surveyed, 33 percent were involved in Hawking/vending on the streets, 17 percent in Begging/used for begging and 12 percent in Construction Work during the enumeration. Public toilet and open space were the places where children in street situations usually defecated. As revealed in the survey as many as 42 percent of children in Pune defecated in open. Hardly 7 percent of the children were aware of any NGO or Government programs that provide some assistance to street children. The above study is a very comprehensive one, and has been used in this report as a reference to understand the phenomenon of street connected children in Pune District.

Other studies on Spatial Distribution in Pune and on factors affecting street connected children have been covered under the respective sections in the report, as per the section topics.

8. **Details of the Project Plan:**

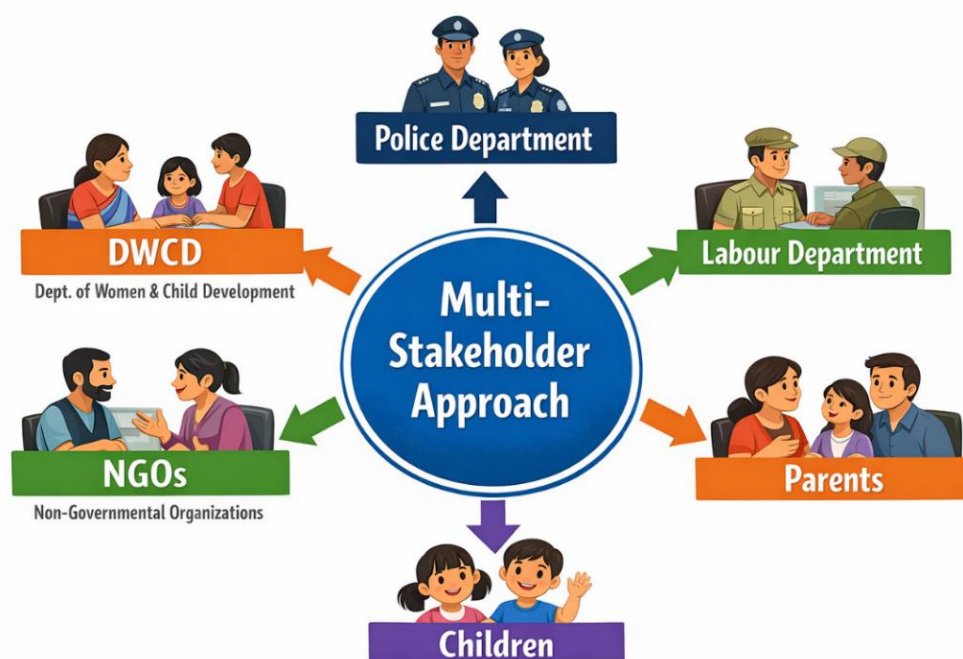
Specific Objectives	Task/s	Methodology	Expected Outcome
Understand and critically analyse the programmes, policies and approaches to address the issues of street connected children and role of various stakeholders in identifying, supporting and rehabilitating these children and to understand coordination among them	Interview key stakeholders including NGOs, JJ system functionaries, Police, Department of Labour and other support agencies to understand and analyse immediate and long- term support to street connected children	Qualitative analysis of the data collected by interviewing stakeholders and available lists with DCPU, Dept of Education, Labour, etc.	Gaps in the existing support provided by the stakeholders will be identified and areas of improvement suggested
Develop a holistic understanding of contributing factors and issues faced by the children and their families	Primary data collection with children and their families, supplemented by secondary data analysis of records available at DCPU as well as past researches	Interviews/ FGDs with children and/ or families with a structured format combined with secondary analysis of available data	Based on primary and secondary data, an estimate of number of street children population will be available for future interventions
Identify and map high risk areas and estimated population	Prepare a list of hotspots, communities and other sites to identify high risk	Secondary Analysis of available data and meeting/	Routine outreach and mapping of hotspots and high-risk

of street connected children in PMC and PCMC areas	children	interviews of key informants	communities will be available
Make recommendations for a coordinated plan in order to inform policy and programmatic action	Hold a stakeholder meeting share the study findings to finetune recommendations for coordinated planning to address the issues of street connected children in Pune	Networking meeting with stake	Recommendations for an Action Plan with a coordinated approach by different key agencies will be in place.

9. Methodology

The study is based on a combination of primary and secondary data collection sources, with an extensive review of available information on the topic. Keeping in view the ecological approach to understand the issues and challenges faced by street connected children, primary data collection was done with the following stakeholders including children.

Multi stakeholder Approach Followed for the Study



10. Research Questions:

Sr. No.	Question:	Source of Information to get answers to these questions
1	Which are the high-risk areas (hotspots and other settings) for the street connected children in the project area?	Previous studies Interviews with DWCD and DCPU NGOs working in Pune
2	What is the total estimated population of street connected children in these areas?	Secondary analysis Visit to areas where street children are identified
3	What are the contributing factors leading to the phenomenon of street connected children?	Interviews/ FGDs with children and their families DCPU, NGOs, CWCs and other stakeholders
4	What are the issues/ challenges faced by the street connected children and their families?	As above
5	Which are the key Government Departments/ Units/ Bodies dealing with street children? Are they playing their role effectively or not?	Meetings/ Interviews with key Departments including DWCD, DCPO and other NGOs supporting street children Children and their parents needing the services
6	Which are the main schemes addressing the needs of street children? How is their functioning?	DWCD, DCPU, CWC, JJB, SJPU, Education Dept., Health, NGOs
7	What are the main challenges faced while implementing the schemes?	Children and Families, NGOs
8	How is the coordination among different Government Departments/ Units and Civil Society Organizations?	Responses to interviews with key Government Officials, Police, Railway staff
9	What recommendations need to be made for having a coordinated plan of action to meet the goal of this project?	Analysis of primary and secondary data Interviews with key Government Officers

11. Details regarding data collection with participation of Multi stakeholders:

Sr. No.	Meetings/Interviews/ FGDs with...	Broad details of Discussion/ information to be collected	Participant details
	DWCD Commissioner & Officials in that office	- Explain the project and seek permission for data collection from the Department - Collect available information - Suggestion regarding the study plan	WCD Commissioner could not be interviewed in spite of several attempts Joint Commissioner (1) Asst. Commissioner also in-charge of DCPU (1)
3	DWCD & DCPU Team	Collect required information regarding overall ICPS Scheme	DWCD / DCPO (1) Child Helpline

		and the various services available under the Dept and the ICPS Scheme including Track child • Status of Childline/ other crisis support • Interview the key officials regarding achievements, challenges and further plans • Take guidance regarding other stakeholders who can be contacted for interview • Suggestions regarding a coordinated plan	Coordinator (1)
4	Dept. of Labour	• No. of working children identified and supported as per the law, interface with other stakeholders • Challenges faced while implementing the law	Asst. Labour Commissioner
5	CWC	• No. of children referred to them in the last two years and by whom • Contributing factors leading to the phenomenon of street children • Details of issues and challenges faced by them (education, health including mental health, family situation, shelter needs, contact with police, hospitals, etc.) • Process by which these children are supported/ rehabilitated, including coordination with various stakeholders and gaps in the implementation of the Act vis a vis these children • Recommendations for improvement in the situation of the street children	Members of CWC I (5) Members of CWC II (4)
6	Open Shelters	• Contributing factors leading to the phenomenon of street children and challenges faced by them and their families • Process by which these children are identified/ referred • No. of children supported in the	SATHI Shelter for boys: Interview with Coordinator (1) FGD with children Matoshree Open Shelter for Girls: Interview with

		last two years • Details of services offered • Details of issues and challenges faced by them (education, health including mental health, family situation, shelter needs, children's behaviour, contact with police, hospitals, etc.) • Process by which these children are rehabilitated, including coordination with various stakeholders and gaps in the implementation of the Act vis a vis these children • Recommendations for improvement in the situation of the street children	Coordinator (1) FGD with Children
7	Community Centres for Children	As Above	Children in Two Centres (16) Community Workers (3) Parents (5) Centre in charge (1) Children in the centres (20)
8	NGOs: Community based (Network members)	• Contributing factors leading to the phenomenon of street children and challenges faced by them and their families • Process by which these children are identified/ referred • No. of children supported in the last two years • Details of services offered • Details of issues and challenges faced by them (education, health including mental health, family situation, shelter needs, children's behaviour, contact with police, hospitals, etc.) • Process by which these children are rehabilitated, including coordination with various stakeholders and gaps in the implementation of the Act vis a vis these children • Recommendations for improvement in the situation of the street children	Action on the Rights of the child (ARC) Network Meeting

10	Other Departments: Police Department, Labour Department	- No. of children identified in the last two years - Immediate support provided - Referral process and coordination with other stakeholders - Follow up done and for how long - Suggestions regarding improvement in the situation of street children	PSI at Pimpri Police Station (1)
11	Families of children	- Exploring challenges faced: Socio-economic situation, housing, use of social protection schemes, crisis situations if any, Facilitation/ hindrance to children's education, etc., - Support required for family/ children related	Parents in Ganga Nagar Area, Pimpri
12	Children	- Classify according to category to which they belong (as given in the definition section) and have FGD/s with them - Understand the factors leading to their present status - Exploring Health status, Education status including reason/s for drop out, mental health status, drug/ alcohol abuse if any, interface with systems such as police, railway staff and JJ System - Challenges faced in the above areas	FGDs in two community centres in Pimpri and in shelter homes (one for boys and one for girls)

Notes:

1. Interview/ FGD Guidelines were prepared for each of the respondents.
2. For network members, a Google sheet was prepared and circulated.
3. Case studies were prepared as and when possible, during the FGDs/ Interviews.
4. Information specific to girls' issues was collected throughout the data collection to get a gendered understanding of the situation. That is why, boys and girls are not repeatedly mentioned in the table.
5. Permission for photos was taken from each respondent before clicking.

SATHI Pune team facilitated contact with the respondents, as they are based in Pune. Support for data collection from Open shelters was provided by Ms. Rajashri Tikhe, a Development Professional based in Pune.

12. Project Timeline

December 2025	January 2026	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026
Proposal finalization	Meetings with concerned Stakeholders	Primary Data Collection	Data Collection (Continued)	Report writing (Continued)
	Identification and mapping of hotspots and high-risk communities	Secondary Data Analysis	Meeting with Network Members	Submission to the concerned authorities

13. Limitations of the study:

The study had a very limited time period, precisely **three months from the date of approval of the proposal**. Primary data collection from various multi stakeholders had to be accommodated within this period. However, majority of the selected could be included, barring a few.

Due to limited time period, SATHI contacts were extensively used to reach out to stakeholders. Participation of families and children from other agencies was not done to avoid any further delay in collecting data. However, the researcher already knew Action on the Rights of Child (ARC) as a network of civil society organizations, so this network was included as a stakeholder group.

Some of the NGOs who were members of ARC network were sceptical about the need for such a study, as there have been at least two major studies in the past especially related to census and spatial distribution of street connected children. Even though a Google sheet was prepared and circulated to the members of the network, no responses were received from any of them. **However, as mentioned earlier, it is hoped that the present study is unique in following a detailed multi stakeholder approach, involving latest policy perspectives and analysis of interventions, which are missing in the previous studies.**

Lastly, the **budget for the study was very limited** and involving more human resources to support the study would not have been possible.

In spite of the above, we were able to get meaningful insights through primary and secondary resources, leading to a set of recommendations for coordinated response in order to address the issues and challenges working with street connected children.

III. STUDY FINDINGS:

Presentation of study findings includes analysis of both primary and secondary analysis of the data, as per the project plan. It has been done in accordance with the sequencing of objectives given earlier, to the extent possible. However, it was found that the responses from the different stakeholders were common across certain areas viz. Contributing Factors, Hotspots, coordination with other focus areas, etc. Therefore, responses of participating stakeholders pertaining to these objectives are integrated into the respective sections as far as possible, highlighting only special points made by the respondents while reporting their interviews/ FGDs.

1. Conceptual Understanding of ‘Street Connected Children’:

1.1. Whom to include in the umbrella term of “street children” (as used by many authors): Broadly speaking, there are two groups of street connected children - ‘home based’, who usually return home at night, and ‘street based’, who remain on the street and have no family support. In some documents, the terms “Children in Street Situations” or “Street Connected Children” are also used. **For the purpose of this study, however, we will use the broad term “Street Connected Children” throughout this report.**

The UNICEF definition specifies three categories of street connected children: ‘of the street’, ‘on the street’ and ‘abandoned children’. This terminology was developed with Latin America in mind. The Railway Children (2009)⁷ project maintains that the UNICEF categorization takes into account children’s contacts with families and excludes children from families who are living permanently on the streets. It includes the following categories:

- **Children ‘on’ the Street:** Children who live with their families, be it on the street, in slums or wasteland or abandoned/derelict buildings, etc. but spend a lot of time working or hanging about on the street.
- **Children ‘of’ the Street:** Children of the street can be further classified into two groups:
 - **Roofless:** Those who live and work on the street (in abandoned buildings, under bridges, railway stations, bus stands, doorways or public parks), yet maintain occasional contact with their families who may live in the same city or in another city or in rural areas. They see the street as their home and spend most of their lives on the streets, begging, selling household goods, rag-picking, scavenging waste materials, shining shoes or washing cars to supplement their income and their family’s incomes. They often send money to their families.
 - **Roofless and Rootless:** Those who live and work on the street (in the widest sense of the term) and have no family contacts whatsoever. These children have run away from their families to escape emotional and

⁷ Railway Children. (2009). Railway Children India Annual Report 2008 – 2009, <http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/wcore/> (downloaded on Apr 29, 2011)

physical abuse (from an abusive stepmother/stepfather, or an alcoholic stepfather) and are presently “roofless and rootless” in the city. They have often been beaten or tortured due to neglect/estranged relationship with their families. They may be orphaned, abandoned or have broken families due to dislocation because of migration, wars, famine, natural disasters and poverty.

1.2 Street Connected Children and Child Workers:

It is important to note that a large number of street connected children are child workers but all child workers may not be street connected. Street connected children and child labourers in India, who are sometimes referred to synonymously, are in fact two different groups, though there is considerable overlap.

1.3 Migration as related to street connected children:

One of the important factors related to street connected children is migration, although migration trends have been changing over a period of time. Shelter Don Bosco, a NGO working for street children conducted a study of the migration patterns and demographic profile of street children in Mumbai⁸. It covered 1359 male children for whom the “street” was a “home” in every sense of the word. i.e. these children had no roof over their heads, and no one whom they could call their own or belong to in the city of Mumbai. The findings of this study indicated that along with the push factors at their hometown/village, the glamour or various pull factors of the city of Mumbai brought these children here. The largest number of children came from the Western zone of the country (56%) followed by those coming from the Northern zone (21%). Children coming from all other zones constituted less than 10% each. Nearly 1% of the children came from outside India (usually Bangladesh and Nepal). It was also observed that the number of children migrating from the western zone (Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan) increased sharply over a period of 4 years (1999 to 2003) from 31% to 56%. The researchers attributed this increase to the natural calamities that took place during this period, and proximity to Mumbai. Further investigation about the place of origin of these children revealed that Maharashtra (50%), Uttar Pradesh (9%) and Bihar (6%) were the main contributors to the body of street boys in Mumbai. After coming to Mumbai, they mainly stayed in the central part (48%), southern part (41%) and in the northern part (11%) of the city. A large number of these street boys had spent 5-15 years in Mumbai (34%).

1.4 Overall, street connected children are often among the high risk and insecure groups and vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuses. They are deprived children, denied not only their rights as children but also their childhood. Without guidance, education and security, they may be heading for an obscure

⁸ D’Souza, R. Sonavat, & D. Madangopal (Eds.) (2004), *Understanding Adolescents at Risk* (pp. 1-10). Mumbai: Multitech Publishing Co.

future. They need support to be steered back to the mainstream of social life through proper education opportunities, reformation, care and rehabilitation.

2. Contributing factors leading to the phenomenon of street connected children and their Vulnerability Mapping

Contributing factors to phenomenon leading to street connected children have already been discussed in the first section of the report. However, more insights were gained through analysis of primary and secondary data from available studies, interviews/ conducted with stakeholders and case studies.

Vulnerability mapping of 229 high risk cases in Pimpri Chinchwad, done by **SATHI** in 2025 clearly explains the dynamics of factors affecting children's well being and development. An analysis of the findings of this study is given below, even though SATHI concentrated on street children from the point of view of educational attainment and school dropouts and classified the children from this point of view (Category A, B and C), highlighting their Common Characteristics (dropout reasons, family situation, etc.).

Category A – Children Pursuing / Appearing for Exams

Aspect	Details
Common Characteristics	- Children technically enrolled but only appear for exams - Lack of regular schooling - Often due to family migration or disinterest
Family Situation	Mostly single-parent households or unstable guardianship
Dropout/Trend Reasons	- Frequent migration - Parents unwilling - Child disinterest
Intervention Needs	- Counselling - Regular school attendance monitoring - Documentation support
Representative Cases	- Sajad Ali (Case 42, frequent migration) - Krish Shringare (Case 46, exam-only attendance) - Puja Suresh Shinde (Case 99, unwilling parents)

Category B – Dropouts / Never Attended

Aspect	Details
Common Characteristics	- Majority of cases fall here - Children dropped out between Class 2–10 - Some never attended school at all
Family Situation	- High prevalence of single parents (esp. mothers) - Orphans living with grandparents

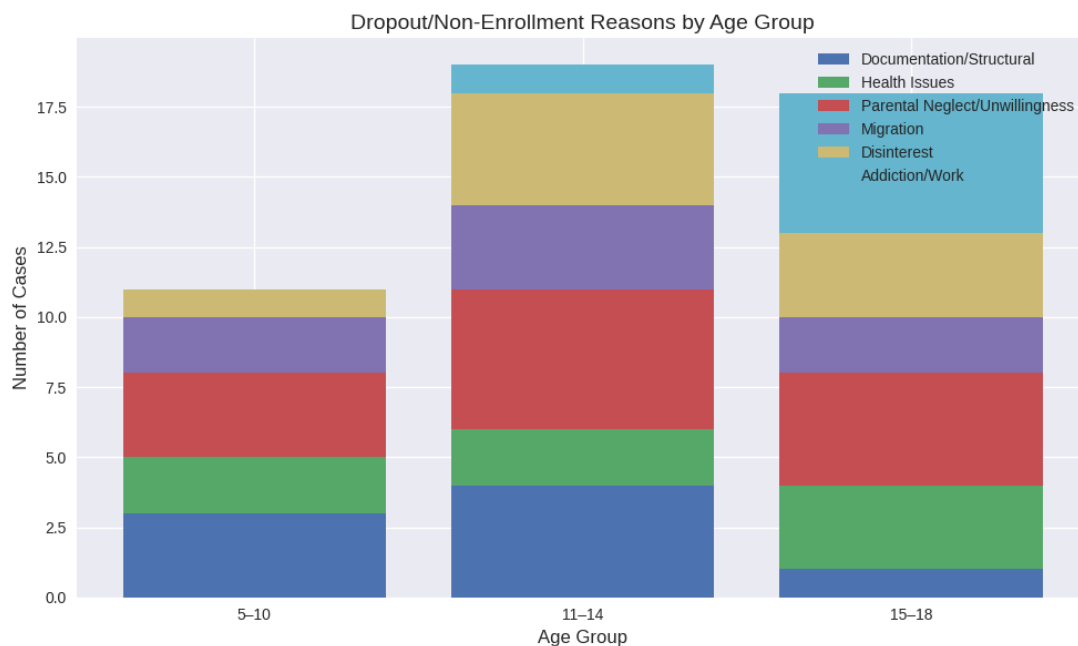
Aspect	Details
	- Domestic conflict, addiction, poverty
Dropout/Trend Reasons	- Economic hardship (fees, documents) - Parental neglect/unwillingness - Health issues (epilepsy, asthma, disability) - Addiction (gutka, mobile, alcohol) - Migration
Intervention Needs	- School re-enrolment - Skill training for older children - Health department linkage - Counselling & de-addiction support - Documentation assistance
Representative Cases	- Swara Oval (Case 1, TC stuck, father's alcoholism) - Lakhan Khedakar (Case 4, mother killed, living with grandmother) - Ganesh Devkar (Case 6, working with mother) - Sarika Gaikwad (Case 10, epilepsy) - Rajveer Athvale (Case 12, orphan, guardian unwilling) - Multiple Waghire siblings (Cases 19–24, health issues, teacher refusal)

Category C – Special Needs / Vulnerable

Aspect	Details
Common Characteristics	- Children with disabilities or severe health issues - Social isolation, bullying, or medical conditions - Orphans with no proper guardianship
Family Situation	- Single parents or guardians unable to cope - Orphans with minimal support
Dropout/Trend Reasons	- Epilepsy, mental disability, hearing impairment, eye problems - Bullying and social isolation - Guardians unwilling to enrol
Intervention Needs	- Referral to CWC (Child Welfare Committee) - Special schools / health department linkage - Counselling for family and child
Representative Cases	- Sarika Gaikwad (Case 10, epilepsy) - Karan Ghodake (Case 41, hearing impaired, bullied) - Soham Tamchikar (Case 43, orphan, risk of addiction) - Dipali Bhandekar (Case 18, orphan, guardian unwilling) - Kanachan Shinde (Case 54, hearing impairment) - Pallavi Nade (Case 61, disinterest + parental neglect)

Key Insights Across Categories

- **Category B dominated** → Most children were dropouts or never enrolled.
- **Family instability** (single parents, orphans, migration) was the strongest recurring factor.
- **Health issues** (epilepsy, asthma, disability) were concentrated in Category C but also appeared in B.
- **Addiction (gutka, mobile, alcohol)** was a growing trend among adolescents (esp. 15–18 age group).
- **Interventions must be multi-pronged:** school re-enrolment, skill training, health linkages, counselling, and CWC referrals.



Across categories of stakeholders, the following Contributing Factors Leading to Street-Connected Children were identified as follows:

1. Family and Social Relationships

- **Conflict within families:** Frequent disputes and lack of harmony at home.
- **Lack of income:** Families unable to provide basic needs.
- **Space constraints at home:** Overcrowding and inadequate living conditions.
- **Dwindling community support:** Reduced neighborhood or extended family assistance.
- **Disturbed family environment:** Instability and neglect.

2. Vulnerability to Conflict with Law

- **Police insights (PSI, Pimpri Police Station):**
 - Children often become CCL (Children in Conflict with Law).
 - Push factors include lack of education, family conflict, and poverty.

- **Gang involvement:**
 - Presence of gangs (e.g., Kotya Gangs) that lure children with financial support.
 - Gang wars and peer pressure increase risks.
- **Influence of social media:**
 - Threats and manipulation through platforms like Facebook.
 - Exposure to gang culture online.

3. Peer and Social Influences

- **Influence of friends:** Peer pressure leading to risky behaviours.
- **Attraction to cities and consumerism:** Desire for luxurious lifestyles.
- **Trafficking risks:** Exploitation by organized groups.
- **Behavioural issues:** Disruptive conduct linked to unstable environments.

4. Education-Related Factors

- **Lack of schooling:** Children excluded from formal education.
- **Lack of interest in education:** Disengagement due to poor quality or irrelevance.

5. Living Conditions and Quality of Life

- **Housing insecurity:** Constant fear of eviction.
- **Sanitation challenges:** High payments for toilet use; poor hygiene facilities.
- **Nutrition:** Reliance on cheap, unhealthy food due to poverty.

General hygiene: Widespread lack of sanitation and cleanliness.

3. Approaches to working with street children:

Approaches across period of time and in the light of national and international discourse on children have evolved. This section tries to summarize them.

Dabir and Datta (2006)⁹ have classified work with street children in three categories:

Reactive Approach to Homeless Street Children: This approach sees street connected children primarily as a threat or potential threat to public order and safety. A key policy manifestation is the use of the juvenile justice system as a way to clear the streets and punish offenders against the common good. This is commonly followed in so called “posh” areas of any city. Under a reactive approach, homeless street children are likely to receive from the authorities, those **welfare and educational provisions available in custodial institutions under punitive policies**. Since a policy goal is to remove ‘delinquents’ from the streets, there may be attempts at rehabilitation or at instilling fear, so that on release children do not return to the streets.

⁹ Dabir N. and Datta, V. (2006), Home Placement of Street Children in Maharashtra, Railway Children and SATHI Raichur.

Protective Approach to Homeless Street Children: This approach perceives children to be both “incomplete” and “our future,” thus needing different treatment than adults; protecting them from potential social evils is seen as imperative. Under this approach, legal sanctions against homeless children are not a preferred option, since they would not be effective in helping children integrate into mainstream society. **National and local welfare policies may include offering temporary shelter or longer-term residential accommodation in state orphanages or children’s homes, and often there are attempts to trace families and return children to their original home environments.** Shelter and protection services may be provided by NGOs, sometimes loosely coordinated by local welfare departments. Under a protective approach, children’s housing by the state is usually conceptualized as a residual welfare measure, often, although not necessarily, using inappropriate buildings which are usually poorly equipped and understaffed.

Using a protective approach, governments encourage civil society organizations to develop and work independently, under loose supervision by state social services. This reflects both state budget constraints and governmental commitment to ensuring that homeless children are adequately protected. Government and NGO relations are likely to be superficially collaborative but in constant tension, as independently-funded NGOs chafe under government requirements to ensure that homeless children are “adequately” protected. **The Open Shelter Scheme by MWCD is a clear example of this.**

Rights-Based Approach to Homeless Street Connected Children: Rights-based approach sees these children as human beings whose fundamental rights have been violated. A key policy within this approach is to ensure the legal protection of children’s rights, promoting the well-being of children through a range of social, economic, cultural and educational measures which allow street children to take control over their own lives. **A central characteristic of this approach is that street children are human beings who have been pushed into a weaker position with few, if any, human rights, and have to cope with a number of additional problems specific to their situation.** Under a rights-based approach, policies are geared to outcome and process goals which emphasize the realization of rights for all children. **This approach recognizes that rights always imply obligations of the state, and can only be realized with empowerment. Structural problems are addressed alongside the immediate causes of problems, and programs are more likely to be inter-sectoral and holistic.**

Childline Foundation India, which has been a pioneering organization to respond to emergency needs of children, connecting her/him to other system, has in all its documents, recommended a three-pronged approach to child protection: Prevention, Intervention and Rehabilitation.

1. **Prevention:** This involves policy dimension of developing systems (including infrastructure), protocols and processes to ensure the safety (psychological, physical, social, economic) of children in all spaces that children inhabit, including services children access during their development.

2. **Intervention:** This involves ensuring easy and immediate access to help and safety for children including immediate and required assistance including medical, nutritional, shelter, psychological, legal necessary for the child in the circumstance; restoration of the child's rights and finally, penalising the perpetrator/stakeholders who have not performed their duties.
3. **Rehabilitation:** This involves access to all services necessary to overcome the child's marginalisation/victimisation and ensure that the child has access to all his/her rights, including socio-economic re-integration of the child.

4. **Estimating the number of street children requiring support:**

Estimating correct number of street children anywhere in the world is a complicated task and there have been a number of studies/censuses. The first census on street children was conducted in 1957 in Chennai (Madras) by the Tamil Nadu government, which was followed by another study in Mumbai (Bombay) in 1959 (cited in Bhattacharya 2003). Some estimates for the period before 1990 put the number of street children in India would be in the range 4-8 lakhs. On the other hand, a UNICEF estimate for 1994 indicated that there were more than 11 million street children in India (www.childinindia.org.in). According to the same source, there were an estimated 314,700 street children in the cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Kanpur, Bengaluru and Hyderabad and around 100,000 in Delhi. In Maharashtra state, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in association with Action Aid India estimated that the number of street children in Mumbai city (only a part of the Mumbai urban agglomeration) was 37,059. Study by International Children's Charity found that India is home to 20 million orphan children being most susceptible to poverty, child labour and child trafficking¹⁰

At the national level, estimates of children in street situations range from 11 million by UNICEF (1998) to 20 million by Aggarwal (1999). According to this report, each metropolis in India is supposed to have more than one lakh children, and with the urban population on the rise, the number is likely to be spread out across cities.

Report on Children in Street Situations – Life on Pune Streets (2017)¹¹ which was a part of the Government to enumerate the number of street children in some major cities of India mentioned that no official statistics made available so far on the numbers. According to this study, 10,771 street children in Lucknow, 1,399 in Mugalsarai, 21,907 in Kolkata -Howrah, 21,926 in Patna 28,560 in Hyderabad were identified as street connected children.

Apart from the above, efforts to study street children so far have largely been in the form of sample studies to understand their profiles and reasons for their being on the street. Government and development agencies have conducted such sample

¹⁰ Sunil Kanta Bhattacharyya (2003): Social Defence: An Indian Perspective. Daya Books, New Delhi.

¹¹ By PMC and Rainbow Homes Foundation

surveys mainly to formulate rehabilitation policies and programmes for children on the hostile streets.

Summary of other Important Studies on Street Children Across India

Study / Source	Focus Area	Key Findings	Implications
Rai & Shekhar (2023)	Education (India)	Many excluded from school due to documentation and economic barriers	Need inclusive schooling models
Rai & Shekhar (2025)	South Asia	Rising numbers linked to urbanization and socio-economic disparities	Regional cooperation needed
UNICEF KPMG	Lucknow, Bhopal, Bhubaneshwar, and Mumbai	Study of Policies and Programmes for Street Children	Integrated Policy Frameworks and multi stakeholder coordination
Save the Children (2022)	Education (Major cities in India)	80% of street children out of school	Reform documentation processes
Salaam Baalak Trust	NGO rehabilitation	100,000+ children rehabilitated	Scalable NGO models
Human Rights Watch (2019)	Abuse	1 in 3 face abuse; high malnutrition and substance abuse	Stronger protection and healthcare needed
Judicial Interventions (1985)	Legal rights	Right to livelihood recognized	Need explicit child-focused protections

Most of the studies identified the **need for integrated policy frameworks, enhanced data collection, and increased funding for child welfare programs. Importance of multi-sectoral coordination among government agencies, NGOs, and community stakeholders to effectively address the complex challenges faced by street children was also emphasized.**

5. Critical Analysis of Policies and Programmes Specifically related to the Street Connected Children:

Many **NGOs** recognized the need for rescue and rehabilitation of Runaway Children especially in the urban settings and initiated programmes for their rescue and rehabilitation much before Government programmes were initiated. **A very important element which was common among these programmes was children's voluntary act of inclusion even in their protective measures rather than coercive**

atmosphere that prevailed in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), which functioned under the JJ Act of 1986. Agencies such as YUVA, Hamara Foundation, Vatsalya, Sneh Sadan, Don Bosco, Salam Balak Trust, Door Step School, etc. had successfully developed models of care, support and protection including day care and open shelters for these children. **The Open shelter scheme of GoI (1998)**, under which some of these agencies were given grant through the state Governments facilitated the models of care and protection including day care and night shelter provided by many of these agencies.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 reiterated this, empowering State Governments to recognize reputed and competent voluntary organizations, which cater to the needs of such children. It stated, **“The State Government shall provide financial assistance to set up and administer Shelter Homes for such children. These Shelter Homes shall offer day and night shelter facilities to the children in need of support services for a temporary period, while efforts are made to rehabilitate them. In order to facilitate and expedite the setting up of Shelter Homes in every district or group of districts, the scheme shall provide financial support to the State Governments and Union Territories.”**

With the handing over of the Open Shelter Scheme by MWCD to the State Governments for budgeting and implementation, the NGOs getting grant under the scheme faced a lot of hardships in accessing funds from the state. Maharashtra was one such state.

Integrated Child Protection Scheme:

ICPS was a flagship Scheme implemented by MWCD in 2011 across states. Under ICPS, **street children are not treated in isolation but as part of a continuum of vulnerable groups.** The approach to street connected children under the **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)**¹², ICPS was an ambitious scheme, bringing comprehensively under one roof, all that was required to address issues related to child protection with an elaborate infrastructure and coordinated action, right up to district level. Based on the official guidelines, ICPS can be summarized as follows:

1. Prevention & Outreach:

- Prioritization of Family-Based Care:
- **Emergency Services: 24/7 Childline (1098)** helpline, linking them to rescue, shelter, and rehabilitation services.
- **Open Shelters in urban and semi-urban areas** to provide safe spaces for street children. These shelters to offer day-care, night shelter, counselling, and vocational training.

2. Rehabilitation & Support

- **Institutional Care (last resort):**
- **Education & Vocational Training:** Convergence with schemes of the Ministry of Labour, HRD, and Rural Development ensures access to schooling and skill-building for street children.

¹² MWCD (2016), Revised ICPS Guidelines.

- **Tracking & Monitoring by** including them in the **TrackChild database**, a live system to monitor children in care and missing children.

3. Civil Society Partnership

4.3 Role of Government Departments in Interventions

- **Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD)**
 - Nodal ministry for ICPS implementation.
 - Provides funding, policy direction, and national-level monitoring.
 - Oversees statutory bodies like Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs).
- **District Child Protection Units (DCPU)**
 - Fundamental units at district level.
 - Identify street children, prepare individual care plans, and maintain district databases.
 - Coordinate with NGOs, local bodies, and adoption agencies.
 - Facilitate rehabilitation through sponsorship, foster care, adoption, or institutional care.
- **State Child Protection Society (SCPS)**
 - Supervises DCPU and ensures fund flow.
 - Implements Juvenile Justice Act and other child protection laws at state level.
 - Coordinates with multiple state departments (Health, Education, Labour, Police).
- **Police & Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU)**
 - Rescue children from exploitative situations (child labour, trafficking, abuse).
 - Produce children before CWCs.
 - Maintain vigilance in high-risk areas.
- **Health Department**
 - Provides medical care, mental health support, and HIV/AIDS interventions.
 - Links street children to nutrition and immunization programs.
- **Education Department**
 - Ensures enrolment of street children in schools under RTE Act.
 - Provides bridge courses and non-formal education.
- **Labour Department**
 - Implements Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.
 - Rescues children from hazardous work and links them to rehabilitation schemes.
- **Judiciary & Legal Services Authorities**
 - Juvenile Justice Boards handle children in conflict with law.



- District Legal Services Authorities provide free legal aid.
- **Urban Local Bodies / Panchayati Raj Institutions**
 - Support community-based child protection committees.
 - Provide shelter, sanitation, and livelihood linkages for families of street children.

4.4 Open Shelters under ICPS

Open Shelters under ICPS were given special importance act as transitional, flexible, and community-based safe spaces for vulnerable children, bridging the gap between street life and long-term rehabilitation. The details are summarized below.

Purpose

- Provide **safe spaces** for children in need, especially those in **urban and semi-urban areas**.
- Designed for **children in difficult circumstances** such as street-connected children, runaways, child beggars, trafficked children, and those without parental care.
- Serve as **community-based alternatives** to institutionalization, offering short-term support and rehabilitation.

Key Features

- **Accessibility:** Located in areas where vulnerable children are most likely to be found (markets, railway stations, bus stands, slums).
- **Flexibility:** Children can access services voluntarily, without rigid admission procedures.
- **Temporary Care:** Provide day and night shelter, food, clothing, counselling, and referral services.
- **Rehabilitation Focus:** Aim to restore children to their families or place them in long-term care options (foster care, sponsorship, adoption, institutional care if necessary).

Services Provided

- **Basic Needs:** Safe shelter, nutrition, clothing, and healthcare.
- **Counselling & Guidance:** Emotional support, crisis intervention, and referral to Child Welfare Committees (CWCs).
- **Education & Recreation:** Non-formal education, vocational training, life skills, and recreational activities.
- **Protection:** Safeguards against abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- **Referral System:** Linkages with CWCs, Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), NGOs, and government departments for rehabilitation.

Implementation & Management

- Run by **NGOs or voluntary organizations** with financial support under ICPS.

- **Cost-sharing pattern:** For NGO-run open shelters, **90% funding provided by the Central Government and 10% by NGOs.**
- Supervised by **District Child Protection Units (DCPUs)** and integrated into the broader child protection system.

Monitoring & Accountability

- Regular reporting to **State Child Protection Societies (SCPS)** and **MWCD.**
- Adherence to **minimum standards of care** prescribed under ICPS and the Juvenile Justice Act.
- Periodic evaluation to ensure effectiveness in rehabilitation and reintegration.

Following this, NCPCR released **SOPs for Street Children: Guidelines for Rescue and Rehabilitation.** Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Mumbai Group for Juvenile Justice, etc. had also come up with detailed Guidelines for Open shelters.

In addition to Open Shelters, **Railway Child Help Desks** were also set up for rescue and rehabilitation at railway stations and **Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP)** set up **Task Force Chariot for Street Children**

4.5 Mission Vatsalya (Child Protection)¹³

In 2022, ICPS was integrated with Mission Vatsalya Scheme with a change in approach. Mission Vatsalya (MV) document mentioned that the focus was shifted from **institutional shelters** to a **comprehensive ecosystem**—combining open shelters, family-based care, community committees, and digital monitoring to ensure rehabilitation and reintegration of street-connected children¹⁴.

Unlike ICPS, which was a distinct programme for child protection, Mission Vatsalya also includes **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), education Schemes, Education Schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Right to Education (RTE)** provisions ensure enrolment of street children in schools with Special focus on reducing **dropout rates** and providing **bridge courses**, Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Programmes, **Bal Sangopan Yojana, Urban Poverty & Housing Schemes, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), MHADA housing schemes** to indirectly benefit street families by providing secure housing. **Rajiv Gandhi Rural Housing Scheme** for vulnerable groups and other social security schemes provide financial aid to destitute families, reducing child vulnerability. In the bargain however, there is complete dilution in the focused interventions required for street connected children.

Mission Vatsalya recognizes street children as *Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP)* under the Juvenile Justice Act but the separate section for Open

¹³ Ministry of WCD, Mission Vatsalya Implementation Guidelines, New Delhi: July 2022

shelters is taken out and they are only one of the types of Child Care Institutions (CCIs) for Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP). There were no other specific community-based programmes for street connected children in MV.

The points included under **Open Shelters under Mission Vatsalya Schemes** are:

- Designed for **runaway, missing, trafficked, working children, child beggars, substance abusers, and those living in slums or unauthorized areas.**
- Provide **short-term care:** education, counselling, life skills, and rehabilitation support.
- Not permanent homes, but **complement institutional care.**
- Run by NGOs or directly by State/UTs if NGOs are unavailable.
- Financial support available for setting up and running shelters.

Comparison of Provisions for Street Connected Children under ICPS and Mission Vatsalya Scheme

In a way, Mission Vatsalya takes the right based, ecological approach to child protection, covering other social protection schemes. However, it is a very big setback as there are no separate guidelines for Open shelters, which is the most important scheme for care, protection and rehabilitation of street connected children and children were locked up in lock and key like in CCIs in both the Open shelters visited for data collection for the study. The coverage of programmes under the open shelter schemes including Night shelters, drop-in centres, residential homes is missing. There is no provision for community-based learning centres. Also, Childline services which were being implemented through the NGOs are now merged with Helpline 112 with Government fully managing it, leading to gross reduction in human resources for child protection. Also, funding has been reduced from CSS to 60:40 sharing with states.

4.6 Mobile Unit Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Street Children: (Phirte Pathak for Street Children)¹⁵:

Government of Maharashtra had submitted a proposal of INR 50 lakhs to for the scheme of *Phirte Pathak* to the Central Government under the Innovative Programme Scheme of ICPS. This was approved and therefore, detailed guidelines for implementation in the state were explained in the GR. The plan is to implement the project in Nashik, Pune, Mumbai City and Suburban, Thane and Nagpur (6 districts). The money would come from JJ Fund, the GR said. The GR is essentially a **roadmap for coordinated action** across multiple departments. The GR sets out **official instructions** for identifying, supporting, and rehabilitating children living on

15 Government Resolution (GR) issued by the Government of Maharashtra in December 2022 202212191610225930 GR Number DWCD Operational Guidelines for Phirte Pathak for Street Children

the streets in Maharashtra. It is essentially a **policy guideline** for government departments and local authorities.

This GR is important because it:

- Recognizes street connected children as a vulnerable group needing special attention.
- Provides a structured plan for government action.
- Ensures coordination between different departments and NGOs.
- Aims to move children from unsafe street conditions into safer, supportive environments.

Key Points of the *Phirte Pathak* GR:

Purpose: To ensure street connected children are protected, given access to education, healthcare, shelter, and opportunities for rehabilitation.

Responsibilities:

- District Collectors and Child Welfare Committees must take the lead.
- Local bodies (municipal corporations, councils) are tasked with surveys and implementation.
- NGOs and civil society groups can be involved in support programs.

Process:

- Provision of a child friendly bus/ van with the capacity of 25 children. The person-in-charge of operation of the bus is the DWCD, who would work in collaboration with an NGO. Conduct surveys to identify street connected children.
- Maintain records and track their needs.
- Link them to welfare schemes (education, nutrition, housing).

Funding: The GR specifies how funds will be allocated and monitored for these activities.

Monitoring: Regular reporting and review mechanisms are required to ensure accountability.

Legal Framework: The GR aligns with child protection laws like the Juvenile Justice Act and Right to Education Act.

Responsibilities and Actions

Actor / Department	Responsibilities	Actions Required
District Collectors	Overall coordination at district level	- Organize surveys of street children - Ensure inter-departmental coordination - Submit periodic reports to the state
Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)	Legal and child protection oversight	- Identify children in need of care and protection - Refer cases to appropriate institutions - Monitor rehabilitation progress
Municipal Corporations / Local Bodies	On-ground implementation	- Conduct door-to-door and street surveys - Maintain updated records - Link children to welfare schemes (education, health, housing)
Women & Child Development Department	Policy and funding	- Provide financial support - Issue guidelines for rehabilitation programs - Monitor fund utilization
Police Department	Safety and protection	- Rescue children from unsafe environment - Prevent exploitation and trafficking - Support CWCs in legal processes
NGOs / Civil Society Groups	Support and service delivery	- Partner in surveys and outreach-Run shelters, education centres, and skill programs - Report progress to local authorities
Education Department	School enrolment and retention	- Ensure admission under Right to Education Act - Provide bridge courses for dropouts - Monitor attendance and learning outcomes
Health Department	Medical care	- Conduct health check-ups - Provide immunization and nutrition support - Refer serious cases to hospitals

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced via his official handle on X that the government had approved impactful measures focused on social welfare, infrastructure, and industry promotion. In a significant step towards child welfare, the state approved a **Mobile Unit Scheme for the rehabilitation of street children**. Under the first phase, 31 mobile vans will operate across 29 municipal corporation areas, with a financial sanction of Rs 8 crore. This initiative falls under the Women

and Child Development Department¹⁶. At the time of the study, the proposals from NGOs were being scrutinized by DWCD, GoM.

6. Understanding the Role of Various Stakeholders through Interviews/FGDs with them:

The details regarding responses pertaining to the role of various stakeholders are highlighted in this section. Points regarding contributing factors, hotspots and challenges faced by street connected children and families are given in the respective sections.

6.1 Understanding Government Interventions through data collection from Government Agencies:

Representatives of the following Government Departments/ Units could be interviewed as per their availability:

6.1.1 Highlights of Responses during Interview with Deputy Commissioner (DC) DWCD and Assistant Commissioner in charge of MSCPS: (The Commissioner could not be interviewed due to her busy schedule)

1. After successful experiment, the **Department managed to get the grant for *Phirte Pathak Scheme* from MWCD under Innovative Programmes** at the state level. The DC mentioned the GR (given earlier). The Scheme was also approved by the cabinet and eventually, several applications for implementation of the Scheme. (Details given earlier). She was scrutinizing them and the scheme would be implemented soon in the district.
2. There was also a plan by the Department to increase the coverage of Family strengthening schemes by GoM. **BSY, a flagship scheme of GoM**, presently covers 1,45,000 children. **Attempts were being made to reach out to more children**. They have already identified 4000 children who had lost both parents during COVID 19. They would be given priority under BSY support scheme. The grant for BSY is now increased as given in the new Guidelines.
3. **Sponsorship Scheme** had 35,270 beneficiaries at present, DC mentioned.
4. **New Guidelines for foster care were approved**. However, only 17 children were being supported so far. For fostering, they are asking for online applications for foster care through DCPU. However, awareness regarding foster care needs to be enhanced.
5. **Human resources are inadequate for implementation of the programmes**. Right now, only 3 out of 12 vacancies filled in DCPU. DWCDO doubles up as DCPO, increasing workload as well as responsibility. Each staff has multiple responsibilities. Thus, monitoring of programmes is difficult.

¹⁶ PUNE PULSE, May 13, 2025

6. Regarding the question on under-utilization of funds under ICPS (now under MV Scheme), DC mentioned that **programme funds are fully utilized. However, there is underutilization mainly due to non-fulfilment of large number of vacancies.**
7. To the question on why only so few children were covered under open shelters, she said that **Open shelter can expand only after Phirte Pathak is launched, as more and more children will be reached and identified for support and rehabilitation.**

6.1.2 Interviews with DWCDO (also working as DCPO and in-charge of Child Helpline) as well as with Child Helpline Coordinator for Pune District:

1. Child Helpline Coordinator mentioned that Child helpline is **launched since January 2025. This is replacing Childline which had NGOs distributed area wise to facilitate reach out.**
2. He was comfortable with his workload of 10-12 cases per day, but said that the **cases were being referred mainly by NGOs or concerned citizens, and not by children themselves. This was unlike Childline where cases were mostly referred by children themselves if they were in distress.** Thus, the essence of the scheme where children feel empowered is lost. Also, this being centralized, local outreach to children is missing,
3. **Types of cases:** Child missing, runaways, Runaways, Child Marriage, Dispute in family, School related, Begging, etc. There were cases of children putting silver like substance on the body for begging, etc. This was harmful for the skin. Unfortunately begging is not considered as child labour, he said.
4. Referrals to the Helpline were mainly From **Dagdu Sheth Halwai temple, Kothrud, Deccan, FC Road.**
5. **About 60% children referred were coming from Maharashtra, the rest being migrants from UP, Bihar, West Bengal, etc.**
6. **Cases of Railway children were also being referred** although the number had reduced. Average was about 40 children per month.
7. **There was mixed feedback about Police.** The Police did not know about the role of DCPU, and there was not much response to children's cases in general, unless it was a case of Child in Conflict with Law (CCL).

6.1.3 Interview with PSI in Pimpri Police station:



1. **Causes leading to problems in children:** PSI mentioned problems related to space at home, lack of education, etc. Family conflict was another reason.
2. He said Community support to families and children is dwindling, and strengthening of families as well as children is required.
3. Another problem is lack of family income due to limited livelihood opportunities.
4. He stressed more on CCL, where the Police have a major role to play. He shared that there are many gangs like to Kotya Gangs, in which the children get tempted to join. One of the ways is financial support by the older gang members.
5. He stressed the effect of social media on children. He mentioned the children sometimes get threatened through face book, etc. Even gang wars happen among children's gangs.
6. The other types of children they come in contact with are at the railway station, but in general, fewer number of children are caught as thieves but there is involvement of children in burglary at night in some cases.
Surprisingly, he said there are fewer migrants among CCL.

6.1.4 Meeting with Assistant Commissioner, Dept. of Labour:

The Assistant Commissioner gave very limited information, saying that **their department did not have much activity going on with street connected children, though they participated in various campaigns organized by the NGOs from time to time.**

The Department did not have any allocated budget for child Labour but whenever they needed funds for rescues, campaigns, etc.m they submitted proposals, which would get sanctioned without any difficulty.

He said his Department Officials would be happy to participate in any programmes when invited by the NGOs.

6.1.5 Interviews with CWC Members of Pune District:

Pune District has two CWCs: CWCI and CWC II.

Division of work: CWC I takes up cases from PMC whereas CWC II has cases from PCMC and other Talukas. However, both CWCs are located within PMC area, next to each other.

Discussion with CWC I: The interview was attended by four members, including the Chairperson.

A summary of discussion with them is as follows:

1. Profiles of children: Many street connected children coming to them are migrant children, mostly from Bengal, Bihar, etc. Some are also pavement dwellers living with families while others are runaways from home.
2. They could not think of any specific areas from where children were referred to them.
3. There were fewer cases of girls referred to them.
4. Closing of institutions affected their rehabilitation efforts, as some of them really needed, but did not fit into the fixed criteria of institutionalization. On the other hand, some of them did not adjust to institutional environment and absconded.
5. They felt that parents' attitude needs to change. Parents often view children as economic asset and make them beg or work.
6. They also emphasized the need for family strengthening services. There was limited quota for BSY, and many of the eligible cases could not benefit.

CWC II: Discussion with three members including Chairperson

1. They mentioned how PMC and PCMC areas are different. PCMC is an Industrial Belt with Labour Camp, etc. with a larger migrant population.
2. Problems reported to them were elopement, child marriage, etc. which were different from the types of cases referred to CWCI, catering to PMC area.
3. They too mentioned there was only one case of a girl referred to them. The rest were all boys.
4. Very often, if a case of violence etc. is referred to them where police is involved, parents pressurize them to withdraw the case.
5. They have also come across cases of bonded labour.

6. They too mentioned the problem of absconding from institutions. They said that when tribal children are put in CCIs, they are not happy at all as they have different lifestyle.
7. Hotspots: Railway stations, Anandi, Dehu Road, Urli Kanchan, etc. Children engaged in begging, or as temple workers, stall workers.
8. They emphasized that rescue not enough. Follow up including family reunion, family strengthening are equally important.
9. They were very happy coordinating with NGOs and always got help from them as required. Special mention was made of VIPLA, CCDT, Muskan as support agencies.
10. They have observed that since Childline is taken over by Government, there are fewer cases now.
11. They specifically brought out the need to specifically strengthen interventions with children of sex workers, pavement dwellers.

6.2 Understanding the Role of NGOs in addressing the issue of street connected children in PMC and PCMC:

As mentioned earlier, **NGOs are the backbone of child protection for street children**, bridging the gap between policy and practice. They not only provide immediate relief but also work toward systemic change so that no child is forced to live on the streets.

Data collection related to NGOs was done as follows:

5.2.1 A detailed study of two of the three Open shelters for street connected children in Pune: One for boys and the other for Girls

5.2.2 Visits to two community centres in Pimpri Chinchwad run by SATHI in partnership with EDUCO, which included interaction with children attending the centres, their families, centre-based workers as well as person in charge of the centres.

5.2.3 FGD with about 25 members of ARC, a well-established network on child Rights in Pune

5.2.4 Interview with Coordinator of Sarva Seva Sangh having extensive family and Community Based interventions in Pune

6.2.1 A Detailed Study of Open Shelters:

As mentioned earlier, Open Shelters for Children in Need in Urban and Semi-Urban Areas cater to the unique needs of homeless children, children living and working on the streets, substance abusers, child beggars, ragpickers, street performers, trafficked and runaway children, children of migrant population, children living in

unauthorized areas/slums, children of socially marginalized groups and any other vulnerable group of children.

Presently, Pune district has three open shelters under the MV Scheme, two for boys and one for girls. A detailed study of two shelter homes, one run for boys by SATHI and the other called Matoshri Shelter Home for girls¹⁷.

6.2.1.1 Report on SATHI (Society for Assistance to Children in Difficult Situations) Shelter Home for Boys

Background

SATHI (Society for Assistance to Children in Difficult Situations) was started in 1997 in Raichur. *SATHI Shelter Home for boys* was established in 2012.

Staff

The shelter home has the following staff: Project coordinator – 1, Social worker – 1 (Social worker also works as a counsellor), Outreach workers – 3, Care takers – 2, Cook and cleaning helpers - 1

All of the above staff members are residential.

The staff is engaged in conducting non-formal education classes for the boys. A dedicated trainer is appointed for teaching arts and crafts.

The sanctioned capacity of the shelter home is 20 inmates; however, there are currently 14 inmates. During the visit, one of the boys was in the process of being handed over to his parents.

Hotspots where Boys are Found

- Railway stations
- Bus stand
- Temples where children earn money through small jobs or begging
- Signals especially children involved in begging
- Slum areas for irregular/drop out children

Boys come from across India but majority of them are from Maharashtra, UP and Bihar

Reference Points

- Rescue team identifies on hotspots
- Mostly referred by CWC

¹⁷ The studies of two shelter homes were conducted by Ms. Rajashri Tikhe, Development Sector Consultant

- Outreach team of Child Helpline
- Police
- Railway Protection Force (RPF), Government Railway Police (GRP) or other railway authorities like Ticket Collector (TC)
- Porters and vendors on the platform
- Taxi or rickshaw (auto) driver

Factors Responsible for the Phenomenon of Street Connected Children referred to them

Disturbed Family Environment: This is a significant factor forcing boys to leave home. Children in single-parent families may at times receive inadequate care, particularly when the parent is under emotional or financial stress due to death, separation, or divorce. There is also a risk of neglect or abuse from step-parents in cases of remarriage. Many boys reported that parents compelled them to discontinue their education and engage in paid labour.

This reality is clearly illustrated in the case of a 15-year-old boy from Chennai. He had been living with his father, stepmother and younger stepbrother. His father worked as a painter. His mother had died of a heart attack 7 years ago, after which his father remarried. Following the birth of her own son, the stepmother reportedly began neglecting the boy.

He was compelled to drop out of school after completing the 6th standard and was sent to work at a hotel. His daily routine involved strenuous tasks such as washing utensils and sweeping, and he was allowed to return home late at night only after closing the establishment. The hotel owner paid him ₹7,000–₹8,000 per month, but he was required to hand over the entire amount to his father.

On one occasion, he asked for some money to buy new clothes. After this incidence, when he refused to go to work, his father allegedly beat him and locked him in a room. The stepmother reportedly withheld food for 2–3 days. He was again forced to resume work at the hotel. When he threatened to approach the police, he was intimidated and sent back to work.

In a state of distress, he ran away to Mumbai, where he worked in two different hotels and gradually learned Hindi. However, he faced financial exploitation at both workplaces. The first hotel owner paid him only Rs. 5,000 per month. The second owner promised him Rs. 8,000 per month. Initially he did pay the promised amount but subsequently reduced the payment to Rs. 5,000 and later stopped paying altogether, offering only small amounts (Rs 200–Rs300) as needed.

Frustrated by continued exploitation, he left Mumbai and boarded a train to Pune. The SATHI team brought him to the shelter, where he has been staying for the past 1.5 months. He has expressed unwillingness to return home and has shared his desire to resume schooling

In economically vulnerable families, parents are often heavily engaged in earning a livelihood and have limited time to adequately supervise and care for their children. As a result, children tend to roam unsupervised when parents are at work, come into

contact with anti-social elements, develop addictions, lose interest in education, and eventually enter the workforce prematurely. This pattern is observed particularly in slum settlements.

In some cases, parents themselves struggle with substance use. Living in cramped housing conditions, children are frequently exposed to domestic conflict, including situations where the father consumes alcohol, quarrels with the mother, and resorts to violence. Such environments have a deeply adverse impact on the child's well-being and development.

Attraction to Cities and Luxurious Lifestyle

Children in small villages often develop misconceptions about urban life. The flashy lifestyles portrayed in television serials, films, and social media reels create unrealistic aspirations. At times, exposure to expensive or fashionable items in their neighbourhoods or among schoolmates further intensifies these desires. When parents are unable to fulfil such demands, some boys react emotionally and run away in search of jobs and income to support these aspirations.

Influence of Friends

In some cases, children are brought away from home by friends under the pretext of providing employment. As per the FGD findings, 38% of the participants reported leaving home under the influence of a friend.

Lack of interest in Education

The Project Coordinator stated that some children show a lack of interest in education. He didn't comment on the education system or quality of schools. According to him, parents from low socio-economic strata sometimes under the pressure of popular trend, enrol their children in expensive, prestigious English medium schools. Many children struggle to adjust to this environment, fall behind academically and eventually drop out. Some of them run away due to fear of their parents' reaction.

Last year, a boy from an economically vulnerable family ran away from home due to fear of an upcoming examination. His father was a farmer who also rented out his bullocks for ploughing others' fields. Both the boy and his sister were in Grade 10, and he was anxious about failing the board examination.

While the boy was speaking with an unknown person at the railway station, a team member noticed the interaction and became suspicious that the individual might be attempting to traffic or exploit him. When the team member began inquiring about the person's relationship with the boy, the individual quickly left the spot.

Initially, the boy falsely stated the name of his town and told that he had come for travel with a friend

who had left him behind. However, it later emerged that the man he was speaking with had been promising him a job.

The team completed the standard intake procedures, but the boy did not disclose the real reason for leaving home until he was brought to the shelter. Later that evening, once he felt more at ease, he revealed the truth to the centre in-charge.

At first, he hesitated to share his parents' contact details, but he eventually did. The team contacted his parents, who confirmed that he was indeed scheduled to appear for his board examination and that he had run away from home. They were requested to share the hall ticket for verification, which they promptly provided.

Upon confirmation, the team decided that since the boy was in their care, it was their responsibility to ensure that he did not lose his academic year. The team determined to make every effort to ensure he appeared for the examination and did not lose his academic year.

The Project Coordinator spoke with the Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and explained the urgency of the situation. Calling the parents to Pune would have caused delays and risked the boy missing his examination. Following the discussion, swift action was taken to safeguard the child's future. The Chairperson issued an immediate reunification order, and the organization assigned staff to escort the child home. It was approximately 10:30 p.m. at the time.

Simultaneously, the team contacted the Head-master of the boy's school and requested consideration in case the boy arrived slightly late for the examination. The Head-master agreed. The boy's sister was advised to keep all necessary documents ready to save time.

Meanwhile, the child received counselling and was motivated to appear for the exam. The following day, the team ensured that he reached the examination centre well before the start time, and he successfully appeared for the exam.

The parents were initially upset and frustrated, expressing that despite their hard work to support their children's education, their son had not valued their efforts. The parents were counselled and sensitized that children can make mistakes and that the boy, being young, was still developing his understanding of right and wrong. It was explained that his action had been driven largely by examination-related stress. The parents were requested not to react harshly and were helped to understand the circumstances behind his decision.

When the results were declared, he passed the examination successfully. Thus, the timely intervention and coordinated efforts of the SATHI team helped safeguard the child's future.

Lack of Schooling

Some of the children are never enrolled in the school in absence of required documents such as birth certificate, caste certificate, etc. This highlights a gap in the effective implementation the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, mandates that no child should be denied admission on the grounds of missing documentation. Apathy on the part of the parents also contributes to non-enrolment in certain cases. Such children are at higher risk of being drawn into child labour and may subsequently leave home either in search of employment or due to the attraction of urban life.

Behaviour issues

A few children exhibit behavioural challenges and show reluctance to remain at home. They tend to run away repeatedly in search of perceived freedom and a life without restrictions.

Trafficking

So far, no child admitted to the shelter has been identified as having been trafficked by relatives or other anti-social elements. According to the Project Coordinator, it is relatively easier to identify a child who has run away independently, as such children often appear lonely, anxious, and disoriented. However, identifying trafficked children at railway stations is considerably more challenging.

Traffickers are typically well-prepared and often pose as relatives (such as an uncle) to avoid suspicion. There are also instances where children are sent for labour by their own families; in such cases, they are usually accompanied by adults, either relatives or known persons from the village. This further complicates the identification of potentially trafficked children at railway stations.

Profile of the Boys

FGD with boys Out of a total 8 boys who participated in the FGD, 63% came from single-parent families. Among them, 60% had lost their mother in death, 20% reported death of the father and in 20% of the cases parents were separated.

Age Group

The age group of the current inmates ranged from 6 to 15 years.

Family Background

All the boys belonged to low socio-economic backgrounds, Poverty often compels children, especially boys, to seek employment in order to contribute to their family's income.

As noted earlier, the majority of the boys came from single-parent families. In such situations—whether due to separation or the death of one parent—the remaining caregiver may struggle to provide adequate supervision and support to the child.

Educational Background

Out of a total 8 boys participating in the FGD, 75% were dropped out at different levels, mostly at upper primary level. The remaining 25% of the boys reported to have never been enrolled. One child who had dropped out and another who had never been enrolled expressed a desire to attend school.

Trend of Child Labour

Except for one child, all other children (88%) participating in FGD were engaged in child labour either willingly or forcefully. Two of the boys reported being forced by their parents to work; in both the cases boys expressed interest in attending school. In remaining cases, two possible situations emerged - 1) parents compelled the child to work, 2) the child lost interest in the education, discontinued schooling, and began working either voluntarily or on parental suggestion.

Three boys (38%) reported working in hotels. Other occupations reported included assisting a Samosa hawker, rag picking, working as a porter on railway station, labourer in tea plantation and handloom factory.

Three boys reported working in hotels. Other occupations reported included assisting a samosa hawker, rag picking, working as a porter at a railway station, and labourers in a tea plantation and a handloom factory

Types of Exploitation Faced by the Boys

Once the boys arrive at a platform, they are forced to adapt to whatever they encounter.

Exposure to Exploitation and Addiction – Often they are pushed around and forced to do the bidding of older children before being accepted in a ‘gang’. The vagaries of platform life suck them into a vortex and they succumb to addiction, disease and criminal influences. If a child falls into the hands of anti-social elements, they may force him into labour or traffic/sell him.

Excessive Work – The majority of the boys reported that they enjoy staying in a shelter home because it has freed them from workloads that were far beyond their physical capacity. A few boys described the hazardous conditions in which they worked previously. One boy reported that he had to clean filthy public toilets twice a day, which made him feel extremely distressed and unclean. Two others shared exhausting experiences of lifting heavy loads at the railway station and in hotels, as well as washing large numbers of plates, glasses, and utensils. Many reported frequent body aches as a result of such work.

Financial Exploitation - Two boys also reported financial exploitation by the employers, stating that they were either paid less than promised or not paid at all. In one case, a boy reported exploitation by his own parents, who forced him to work and took away his entire earnings, not even allowing him to purchase clothes for himself.

Physical abuse - Half of the boys reported being physically beaten either by their parents or by their employers

Other Distressing Experiences

Although none of the boys disclosed sexual exploitation, one boy shared that he had been stalked and harassed by an unknown person on a railway platform. Feeling

frightened, he approached the railway police for help. Another boy reported an incident in which he was apprehended by the police.

It is evident that many of these children may be carrying trauma from their difficult experiences. In addition, several boys shared other fears that have left emotional scars:

- Some expressed a persistent fear of being alone.
- Those who were earning and carrying money reported fear of theft.
- One boy who worked in a hotel located on a remote hill shared his fear of landslides and of walking alone through the jungle. He also reported frequent exhaustion due to repeatedly climbing up and down the hill.

They shared that they like being in the shelter home because they feel safe and secure in the shelter home and appreciate being free from work that exceeds their physical capacity.

Services offered by the Shelter

Rescue

The outreach team of the shelter regularly visits identified hotspots to locate vulnerable boys. Boys who are missing, trafficked, or have run away are brought to the shelter for care and protection.

Medical Check-up and Health Care

Immediately after a child is identified, he is provided with the support for personal cleaning and hygiene. Subsequently, a medical examination of each identified boy is conducted as per the prescribed procedure. If any health issues are diagnosed, treatment is provided in accordance with the doctor's prescription. So far, no serious health issues have generally been identified.

Shelter and Nutrition

If a child found at the railway station has been without food for a prolonged period, he is immediately provided with food on the spot. Efforts are then made to help the child feel relaxed through interaction with staff and other children and to facilitate his adjustment to the daily routine of the shelter.

Identified boys are provided with a safe and secure environment along with adequate nutrition in shelter homes. The duration of stay in the shelter home ranges from one day to a few months, depending on the cooperation of the child. The sooner a child shares family contact details, the faster the family can be traced. However, when a child does not share this information, identifying the parents becomes challenging.

Some children don't even know the mobile number of their parents. In such cases, if a child is able to share the area (district, block, area), shelter staff attempt to locate the family using internet searches and by contacting nearby persons such as

shopkeepers in that area. If this approach does not succeed, they contact the concerned police station in the respective area to help trace the family.

Since 2012, 35 to 40 thousand children have been rehabilitated through this center.

Last month, a boy was referred to the Centre by the police. He was from Orrisa and had travelled to Chhattisgarh. He got lost and then kept wandering for nearly 2.5 years. During this period, he worked at several places in the hope of earning enough money to return home. Over time, he even forgot his parents' contact number, though he remembered the name of his village, despite having no idea how to reach it.

He requested a help from a truck driver, who handed him over to police while passing through Pune. After his admission to SATHI shelter home, the team, with the support from police was able to trace his address within 15 days. They contacted his maternal, uncle (Mama) who appeared to be the only educated member of the family. Parents had filed an FIR but had lost hope after such a long period.

The boy had also changed his name, so the parents couldn't recognize him by name alone. The SATHI team therefore arranged a video call for identification. Upon seeing their son after so many years, the parents broke down in tears. They were called to Pune, and the family was soon reunited.

Counselling and Case Analysis

Once the child is admitted, the staff initiates a dialogue with the child and tries to understand the actual circumstances. Initially, children often hesitate to open up or may provide misleading information. However, as trust gradually develops, they begin to share the true facts.

Based on the situation, appropriate counselling support is provided to the child. In some cases, other stakeholders—such as parents and teachers—are also counselled. For example, if a child has run away because he is unable to follow classroom teaching or is a slow learner, the team facilitates dialogue with both the teacher and parents to address the issue. Similarly, if a child is unable to adjust to the environment of a particular school, parents are advised to consider changing the school.

Tracing the Parents and Rehabilitation Process

Restoration with the family is always the first priority. After admission, the shelter staff initiates a dialogue with the child to obtain parental contact details. Once the parents are traced and formal orders are received from the CWC, the team contacts the parents and calls them to shelter for the custody of the child.

In case of inability of family members to travel to Pune, the shelter takes the responsibility for escorting the child to his family in consultation with CWC, Pune. An outreach staff member is deputed as an escort and accompanies the child to the CWC office of the concerned district or state. The parents are called in the CWC office to take custody of the child.

Till date 93% of the admitted boys have been successfully restored to their families.

In rare cases, challenges arise when parents are unwilling to accept the child back, especially when the child has run away multiple times. In some instances, if the child is found to be orphaned, if the family is deemed unreliable or unable to provide proper care or if the child expresses unwillingness to return home, the child is institutionalized as per the orders of CWC.

The major responsibilities of the shelter include rescuing the child, preparing the case history, providing short-term shelter, care and protection, tracing the parents and restoring the child in accordance with CWC orders.

Follow-up

After rehabilitation, the follow up is usually kept for a year.

Foster Care

Placement of a child in foster care is rare. A few years ago, one boy was placed in foster care. He was an orphan living with his maternal grandmother (Nani) and was academically bright as well as talented in music, but he lacked adequate support. Therefore, the CWC referred him to our shelter home. He is now continuing his education and has shown remarkable progress in music. He is an excellent guitar player and has won third prize in a state-level competition.

Coordination with CWC, Pune

Based on the counselling and a dialogue with a child, a case paper is prepared. All admitted boys are produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Pune, along with their case papers. The CWC reviews each case and issues orders for rehabilitation. The decision regarding the rehabilitation plan is taken by the CWC. As per the prescribed guidelines, the shelter team implements an individualized rehabilitation plan for every boy.

Coordination with DCPU

The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) is regularly updated through progress reports and major events. Since Chileline has been working under DCPU since 2023 and the team coordinates closely with Childline, they are indirectly coordinating with DCPU on a regular basis. Visiting and supervising the shelter is also a part of the DCPU's mandate.

Education and Skill Training

Following education and skill training support is provided by SATHI

- SATHI conducts non-formal education classes for the inmates to build or refresh their basic literacy.
- They also conduct arts and crafts classes for them.

- Children are also provided with education kit and support for fees to ensure their re-enrolment in school after the restoration with their families.
- The organization also arranges skill training sessions for the children above 18 years of age.

The basic routine in the shelter is as follows:

6am to 7.30am	Getting up and Freshen up
7.30am - 8am	Exercise
8am - 9.00am	Bath
9.00am to 9.30am	Breakfast
10am to 10.15am	Prayer
10.15pm to 10.30am	SATHI introduction/Moral stories
10.30am to 12 noon	Counselling and NFE class
12 noon to 1pm	Craft and physical activities
1pm to 1.45pm	Lunch
1.45pm to 2.30pm	Rest and free time
2.30pm to 4.00pm	Games and TV time
4.00 to 4.30pm	Tea and snacks
4.30 to 5.30pm	Balsabha
6.00pm to 8.00pm	Fun activities
8.00pm to 9.00	Dinner

Though *Balsabhas* are included as a daily activity, neither children nor staff mentioned about them during the conversation.

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- The organization also arranges skill training sessions for the children above 18 years of age.

Coordination with the System and Challenges Faced

Railway Staff

RPF, GRP and other railway authorities provide all possible support. They inform the shelter team whenever they identify a child. The shelter team also shares the child's details with railway staff such as RPF, station master etc. An SOP register containing the details of rescued children is maintained with the Station Master, which helps in tracking the number of children rescued from the station.

Child Welfare Committee (CWC)

The CWC has been very cooperative and responsive. They remain accessible and attend calls even at midnight whenever required.

Child Helpline

Coordination with Child Helpline remains essential. The system had been functioning in an updated manner. However, since 2023, Child Helpline has been transferred from the Childline India Foundation (the mother NGO) to the Women and Child Development Department of the government. It is now being monitored by the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO).

Following this transition, the staff strength has been reduced by half (from 12 personnel to 6). Earlier, the team consisted of a coordinator, a part-time counsellor, and three volunteers who managed the booth and attended calls. In addition, there were seven outreach workers responsible for identifying missing or runaway children.

At present, the government has appointed one supervisor, one case worker, and four outreach workers. Although the team continues to function, it is overburdened and unable to match the earlier level of coverage.

Track the Missing Portal

The 'Track the Missing Portal' has been replaced by the Mission Vatsalya portal. The earlier 'Track the Missing Portal' contained the names and IDs of child care institutions along with details of each missing child. The NGOs had access to the portal to update the information. However, under the new system, the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) is responsible for entering information into the portal. NGOs no longer have access to update the information directly.

Major Challenges

Human Resource Deficit in Child Protection Systems

The Project Coordinator stated that approximately 4-5 children who have run away or gone missing arrive at Pune railway station each day. This data reflects the gravity of this problem from this data.

However, the government and non-government resources addressing this issue are far too limited compared to its magnitude. Shelter home staff and Child Helpline staff are unable to maintain a daily presence at the railway station due to their other responsibilities related to rehabilitation processes. There is a clear need for increased human resources at both the government and non-government levels.

Other Work by the Organization

- SATHI has another shelter home at Delhi.
- It is also working with street children in the slum areas of Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipality area.
- SATHI engages with Govt. Children Homes across the country to reunite the children who have been staying in the homes for long duration with their families. An important component of their work in government homes is sensitizing the Govt. Home staff and involving them in the restoration process, so that they are better equipped to support and reunite more children with their families.
- SATHI supported restored children and their families during COVID 19

Observations

The first observation and the most important one was that even though it is labelled as “Open Shelter”, the children were locked up with strict security. This was extremely disturbing. When asked, the Co-ordinator of the Centre mentioned that under Mission Vatsalya, Open Shelters come under Institutional Care and the NGO is expected to follow the norms for CCIs, where strict vigilance is kept to ensure that no child absconds. In the ICPS Scheme, however, Open Shelters were given as a separate category, separate from CCI norms. Thus, the essence of openness is lost completely.

The shelter home is located in a flat within an old building in a quiet, upscale locality. The rooms are congested, particularly in relation to the number of inmates. The office is situated in a hall (approximately 10 x 8 length) with a kitchen just beside it. There are two bedrooms, where bunk beds are arranged for the children. A veranda connecting the hall and bedrooms also contains bunker beds. There is a long terrace upstairs. A small part of it is covered with tin shade under which gym equipment is kept in a somewhat disorganized manner. The equipment appeared to be inadequate. Overall, the premises were observed to be clean, although it could be maintained tidier. The scarcity of space was starkly visible, especially the complete lack of outdoor play space for the boys.

CCTV cameras are installed in all rooms and all the screens were visible in the hall cum office area. The main door remains locked at all times.

When the interviewer reached the location, the boys were engaged in drawing and painting. They appeared absorbed in the activity, requesting materials as needed,

which the staff provided calmly. After the FGD concluded, they enthusiastically showed their creations to the interviewer and spoke about them. A few other children were playing with Meccano; one of them eagerly explained what he had built using the pieces. Overall, the environment appeared open and relaxed.

The staff seemed to maintain regular dialogue and friendly relations with the boys. While the interviewer was interacting with a boy whose parents had arrived to take his custody, the boy pointed out to the social worker and remarked that she reminded him of his school teacher who used to teach well.

The education and skill inputs provided to the boys appeared minimal and less organized in comparison to that of Matoshri Revamma shelter (Report below). However, the inmates seemed content and not under any visible pressure.

6.2.1.2 Report on Visit to Matoshri Shelter Home run by Niti Niketan Bahu Uddeshiy Sanstha, Wagholi

Background

Niti Niketan Bahu Uddeshiy Sanstha, Wagholi was founded by a woman deeply committed to social causes. Godavari Dyade, who was illiterate and married at the age of 15, could have spent her life like any other housewife. However, she was a woman of determination and foresight, deeply concerned with the well-being and development of girls.

Initially, the orphanage was started in Latur, but when the Dyade family had moved from Latur to Jalna, the orphanage was established in Jafarabad block of Jalna district with a capacity of 100 children. She ran it successfully despite financial constraints. Later, after shifting to Pune, the orphanage was relocated first to Indapur and then to Wagholi. The current actual capacity of the orphanage is 50.

The frequent sight of street children on the roads further strengthened her resolve to work for vulnerable children, leading to the establishment of *Matoshri Revammaa Shelter Home for Girls* in 2012.

The shelter home has the following **staff**:

Project coordinator: 1, Social worker – 1 Outreach workers – 3 Care takers – 2, Cook and cleaning helpers - 3

All of the above staff members are residential. In addition, trainers and counsellors are engaged on a daily basis as required. However, the post of watchman is currently vacant. As reported by the Secretary ma'am, this position is supported by the government, but the department has not yet sanctioned or provided for it.

The sanctioned capacity under the shelter home scheme is 25 inmates; however, there are currently 8 inmates. The interviewer was able to meet 7 of them, as one resident was reportedly unwell and resting in her room.

A total of 180 girls were rescued and rehabilitated between April 2024 and March 2025. The majority were reunited with their families, while approximately 40–45% were placed in institutional care. So far, only one girl has been placed in foster care.

Hotspots where Girls are Found

- Railway station
- Bus stand
- Temples

Reference Points

- Rescue team identifies on hotspots
- Referred by Police or railway staff
- Girls trafficked by anti-social elements or rescued from brothels are referred by CWC
- Sometimes even common persons refer to the suspicious cases e. g Three friends who had run away from West Bengal in search of employment reached Pune and then went to Hinjewadi. While they were eating *Momos* at a stall, the stall owner became suspicious and reported the matter to the police. The police subsequently brought them to the shelter home.

Factors Responsible for the Phenomenon of Girls coming to the Shelter Home

Influence of Social Media

According to the interviewees, one of the major factors contributing to girls ending up on the streets is the influence of social media, especially Instagram. Many girls tend to develop misleading notions about romantic relationships and become trapped in infatuation. The majority of the girls found at railway stations are those who have eloped with their so-called boyfriends.

Attraction to Cities and Influence of Consumerism

Movies and Instagram reels often portray the glamorous side of urban life, which can strongly influence girls, particularly those experiencing hardship and poverty in small villages. The flashy lifestyles depicted in television serials, films, and reels create unrealistic aspirations. When parents are unable to fulfil these demands, some girls react emotionally and run away in search of jobs and income to support these aspirations.

Disturbed Family Environment

This is a significant factor forcing girls to leave home. Children in single-parent families may sometimes receive inadequate care, especially when the parent is under emotional or financial stress due to death, separation, or divorce. There is also a risk of neglect or abuse from step-parents in cases of remarriage. In certain instances, girls face physical, emotional, or even sexual abuse within the family.

There are also cases where parents compel children to discontinue their education and engage in paid labour.

Child Trafficking

Some girls are trafficked by known persons or unknown anti-social elements, either for child labour (primarily domestic work) or for sexual exploitation.

Profile of the Girls

Age Group

All current inmates are adolescents, with ages ranging from 13 to 15 years. However, respondents reported that the overall age profile of residents typically ranges from 7 to 18 years.

Family Background

Majority of the girls come from low socio-economic backgrounds, with parents engaged in daily wage labour, domestic work, farming, or driving. All current residents belong to the lower socio-economic strata. Nearly 40% come from single-parent families or families with a history of abuse.

However, a small proportion of girls also come from relatively higher socio-economic backgrounds. In such cases, parents are often heavily occupied with their professional and social commitments and may have limited time to supervise and support their children. As a result, some children become vulnerable to negative influences while seeking love, care, and attention.

One of the inmates at the centre came from an affluent family. Both of her parents worked in the IT sector and were high earners. However, due to their extremely busy work schedules, they were unable to devote sufficient time to their daughter. She became infatuated with a young man from a slum community who was poorly educated and unemployed, and she eventually ran away with him.

She was later intercepted at a railway station, brought to the shelter home, and provided counselling. The staff traced her parents, and she was subsequently handed back to them. During the restoration process, the parents informed the staff that this was not the first time she had run away with the boy. The parents were also counselled and advised to spend more quality time with their daughter.

Educational Background

Out of the total 8 current inmates, 3 girls (who are friends and ran away from West Bengal in search of employment) were attending school prior to their rescue. Another 3 girls have never been enrolled in school. The remaining 2 inmates were admitted very recently, and their case histories are yet to be documented.

Services offered by the Shelter

Rescue

The outreach team of the shelter regularly visits identified hotspots to locate vulnerable girls. Girls who are missing, trafficked, or have run away are brought to the shelter for care and protection.

Medical Check-up and Health Care

A medical examination of each identified girl is conducted immediately as per the prescribed procedure. If any health issues are diagnosed, treatment is provided in accordance with the doctor's prescription. The respondent stated that the organization assumes full responsibility for the health care of the inmates, including hospitalization when required after admission to the shelter. She cited the case of a girl who underwent surgery for appendicitis.

Shelter and Nutrition

Identified girls are provided with safe and secure shelter along with adequate nutrition. The quality of food provided was found to be satisfactory.

Coordination with CWC, Pune

All admitted girls are produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Pune, along with their case papers. The CWC reviews each case and issues rehabilitation directions. Based on these guidelines, the shelter team prepares an individualized rehabilitation plan for every girl.

Reunion with Family

Reuniting girls with their families is the primary approach in most cases. Shelter staff engage in counselling sessions to obtain parental contact details. Some girls share this information readily, making tracing easier. However, a few hesitate due to fear of parental reaction; such girls are counselled until contact details are obtained. After verification of the parents' identity and suitability, they are called to Pune. Girls are handed over only in the presence of the mother or a female relative (in the mother's absence).

Follow-up

After family reunification, follow-up is conducted through home visits and phone calls for at least one year, and extended to 2–3 years if required. Currently, such follow-up is maintained only for inmates within the district. Follow-up is generally not conducted for girls belonging to locations outside Pune district or Maharashtra state.

Institutionalization

While family reunification is prioritized, in cases where a girl is orphaned or where reunification is not advisable from the perspective of her safety and well-being, she is placed in a child care institution or an appropriate educational facility.

The shelter home team found a 7-year-old girl crying at Pune railway station and brought her to the shelter for care and protection. Subsequent inquiry revealed that she belonged to Solapur. Her parents were separated, and her mother had left home with her son. The girl was living with her paternal aunt and father. The father was reportedly alcohol-dependent.

While travelling with his daughter to Mumbai, the father became heavily intoxicated en route. In this condition, he left the child at Pune railway station while boarding a connecting train to Mumbai.

Following the inquiry, the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) concluded that the aunt's home was neither safe nor conducive to the child's development. The father was found to be irresponsible, and the aunt was considered unable to ensure the girl's care and protection. Accordingly, CWC Pune, in coordination with CWC Solapur, ordered that the child be placed in an educational institution.

The shelter home produced the girl before CWC Solapur and, as per the Committee's directions, admitted her to a suitable institution. Although the family initially opposed the decision, the shelter staff proceeded with the rehabilitation in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

Foster Care

So far, none of the girls have been placed in foster care.

Coordination with CWCs of Other Districts and States

In cases where inmates belong to locations outside Pune district or Maharashtra state, the respective Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) are duly involved. Once the rehabilitation plan is finalized in accordance with the CWC's directions, the shelter home team coordinates with the concerned CWCs to ensure effective implementation.

Coordination with DCPU

The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) is informed in cases of hospitalization of any inmate or if any resident runs away from the shelter.

Education and Skill Training

The daily routine of the shelter home is structured to keep residents meaningfully engaged in various activities. The shelter has an established system for the education

and skill development of inmates. The details of the education and skill training sessions are as follows:

6am to 7am	Getting up and Zumba
7am - 8 am	Prayer, meditation
8am - 9.30am	Break for getting ready
9.30am to 10am	Breakfast
10am to 12 noon	Classes
12.30pm to 1pm	Lunch/Yoga/Game
1pm to 2pm	Lunch/Rest
2pm to 4pm	Stitching Class
4pm to 6pm	Tuition
At 6.30pm	Prayer
7.30 to 8.30pm	Dinner

The organization ensures that the inmates remain constructively engaged both physically and mentally. The Secretary believes that such engagement helps prevent them from drifting toward unhealthy thoughts while also enabling them to learn new skills and knowledge.

Week Days	10am -12 noon	12.30pm to 1pm	2pm to 4pm	4pm to 6pm
Monday	Jembe	Lunch	Stitching	Tuition
Tuesday	Computer	Yoga	Stitching	Tuition
Wed	Computer	Yoga	Stitching	Tuition
Thursday	Story telling	Lunch	Stitching	Tuition
Friday	Life skill	Gaming	Stitching	Tuition

Saturday	Counselling	Lunch	Life Skill	Tuition
Sunday	off			

The majority of the girls shared that they enjoy the stitching class the most. Some expressed a preference for the computer class, while a few others liked the tuition sessions. One of the inmates shared that she is particularly fond of the storytelling class. These sessions offer renewed hope, especially for those who were never enrolled in school, were forced into labour, or experienced abuse within their families.

Coordination with the System and Challenges Faced

Railway Staff

Railway staff currently do not permit shelter staff to enter the platform area. This restriction limits timely identification of vulnerable children and increases the risk of girls falling into the hands of anti-social elements or other street children present on the platform. Therefore, it is critical to locate and assist them immediately upon their arrival by train.

Police

In most cases, the police provide the required support. However, due to their existing workload, they are often reluctant to assist when girls need to be escorted outside the district or to another state, leaving the shelter staff to shoulder the responsibility.

It is also frequently observed that children engaged in begging or street labour remain unnoticed in terms of proactive police action. This indicates systemic gaps that need to be addressed.

Child Welfare Committee (CWC):

The CWC is generally cooperative. Girls are handed over to their parents only in the presence of CWC members. In cases where parents travel from distant locations, CWC members facilitate the process by joining online to avoid inconvenience. The primary challenge is that admission and rehabilitation processes may sometimes be delayed due to the heavy workload of CWC members.

Child Helpline:

Coordination with Childline remains essential. However, the number of cases identified by Childline has reportedly declined over the past 3–4 years, particularly after 2021. Respondents perceive a drop in efficiency, possibly due to staff shortages.

TrackChild Portal:

At present, the TrackChild portal is reportedly non-functional, which is creating difficulties in tracking children effectively.

Systemic Gap:

Another significant concern highlighted is the absence of a robust mechanism to identify and apprehend traffickers.

Challenges at Organizational Level

Inadequate space and financial constraints at the organizational level are key challenges affecting both the scale and the quality of the work.

Challenges Faced with Girls and Parents

Girls

Girls often take time to adjust to the shelter environment. The initial adjustment period can be challenging, as some residents are reluctant to cooperate with routine procedures. They may provide incorrect personal histories or refuse to share parental contact details. Girls who are mentally distressed or experiencing trauma may display aggressive behaviour; in one instance, an inmate even threatened self-harm. Such cases require careful, patient handling. Others may become withdrawn and unresponsive. All such cases are provided with counselling support.

A few girls also present with substance use issues, including gutkha, cigarettes, alcohol, and in some cases, drugs. They may exhibit withdrawal symptoms that need to be managed sensitively and skilfully.

Girls who have eloped due to romantic involvement may express a strong desire to return to their partners and may attempt to run away. Patience, empathetic engagement, and counselling are key to addressing these situations.

Parents

At times, parents become impatient regarding the custody of their daughters and may repeatedly contact staff, including at odd hours.

In cases where a girl has eloped, some parents initially refuse to accept her back due to fear of social stigma and concerns about family reputation. There are also instances where parents neglect or mistreat their daughters.

Such situations require sustained dialogue and counselling with parents to facilitate safe and appropriate rehabilitation of the child.

Other Work by the Organization

Niti Niketan Bahu Uddeshiy Sanstha, Wagholi also runs an orphanage for boys at Wagholi with a capacity of 50 residents.

The organization had previously worked with street children from migrant families in areas around Khadki station, Nagar Road, and nearby locations. The interventions

included non-formal education classes and nutritional support. At present, this project has been discontinued due to lack of funds.

Observations

The shelter home is located in a densely populated lane of Ganga Nagar, Fursungi. However, once inside the building, the premises feel relatively secluded. The facility comprises a four-storey building with an office on the ground floor and residential rooms on the first, second, and third floors. A hall for tuition classes is located on the third floor. The fourth floor houses the kitchen, a larger hall accommodating the computer lab and sewing machines, and an open terrace.

Overall, the premises were observed to be clean and aesthetically maintained, with wall paintings reportedly created by the girls themselves.

Although CCTV cameras are installed throughout the facility, the live feed from the girls' rooms was switched off on the office monitor at the time of the visit.

Permission to conduct a focused group discussion (FGD) with the girls was declined by both the Secretary and the Social Worker. They expressed apprehension regarding direct interaction with the residents and did not permit discussions on sensitive aspects such as reasons for running away, educational background, or experiences of labour or abuse. The interviewer was allowed only limited informal interaction with the girls, primarily related to their skill training and tuition activities.

This experience differed from the previous visit to the Sathi shelter home, where access to the boys' residential areas was comparatively more open and staff were more comfortable facilitating interaction. The boys there also appeared to engage more freely with the staff.

6.2.2 Visits to Community Centres for Children:

Introduction:

Apart from the running of Open Shelter, SATHI also has a community-based project in partnership with Educo. This project aims to enhance the quality of life for street connected children by providing access to care, protection, education, and family support, ensuring their well-being and reintegration into society. It works to identify and support vulnerable children in 32 urban communities of Pimpri-Chinchwad and Pune, including those living on the streets, out of school, at risk of dropout, involved in begging or child labour or facing challenges such as addiction, separation, or behavioural issues. Through rehabilitation, education, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and family reintegration, the project is trying to establish community-based child protection mechanisms to prevent exploitation and provide long-term assistance. By collaborating with law enforcement, government agencies, and local organisations, the initiative aims to create a structured support system that ensures the safety and well-being of street children. Additionally, the project aims to

advocate for child-friendly practices among government stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of policies that safeguard children's rights and well-being.

Overall discussion with SATHI Team and other stakeholders such as CWC, DWCD, DWCD, DCPU and Police Department, it was found that SATHI was working in close coordination with other stakeholders. A comprehensive approach to community-based identification and outreach, rehabilitation and advocacy was being followed. This was in keeping with the project objective and plan, a pictorial presentation of which is given below:

SATHI-EDUCO Project at a glance



Visit to Community-Based Learning Centers:

Introduction:

There are two community-based centers in Pimpri Chinchwad run as a part of the above-mentioned project, and both were visited. Work in both started in July 2025. SATHI maintains contacts with communities around in order to find out high risk cases including working children, school drop outs, addicted children, etc. Some of these children attend the community learning centres.

Centre 1: Rising Star Centre: Office based:



Location and ambience:

This center is run in a Mall on first floor and is a one room space, where activities for children are conducted. The atmosphere is not conducive to running a Centre for children. The center had some luggage stored around, and was not very welcoming, though there were a few paintings done by the children.

Children attending:

Due to school timings varying for most of them, only four children attended the center during the visit. It was reported that in general 17-18 children attend the center. All the four children were from a nearby community, and were settled there.

Activities:

The center-based activities included Education, Nutrition and Recreation. The worker was also in touch with families of the children, communities around as well as schools. For activities such as sports, recreation and outings, nearby school premises were used.

Children showed the note books in which they wrote, but there was not much interactive learning happening there. Events are organized regularly, though center-based learning needs to be more structured, it was felt.

Background:

All the four children were from Muslim families and fathers had their own business or were working. Mothers were either home based or worked as domestic help. According to the worker, most of them are either irregular or have not attended school.

Many children addicted to drugs but do not open up easily.

Feedback: The center is still in the process of getting established and needs to be more structured in terms of activities.

Ganganagar Community visit for interaction with families:**Location:**

This is a Transit camp given by the PCMC. The space is neat and clean. Houses are tin sheds with common toilets. It was extremely hot within the house and families were not happy.

The families:

Most of the families were from Maharashtra, though houses were given to other communities by some, given the type of transit accommodation provided by PCMC. Families seemed to be well settled in Pune and not migrants.

**The Camp:**

SATHI has rightly identified children from the community who were in substance abuse. Researcher met the mothers one by one, as they did not come together as a group. Mothers mentioned addiction to gaming by children, although they said no money involved there. Children are addicted to gaming and also miss school often due to that. This needs attention. Children are also involved in substance abuse, mostly due to peer pressure. Parents were very much concerned about the future of the children.

Feedback from parents on children's camp:

There were many children from this community who had attended the camp. The researcher met some parents whose children had attended the camp.

There were mixed reactions to the camp. Parents mentioned that the camp did help and children had changed after they came back from the camp. They were also more vigilant about the addiction and yet they found that children take back to drugs when they return. Therefore, close follow up is required.

Bhatnagar Learning Centre:

Location:

This center is located within a school. However, there is no fixed space given by the school, so they have to use whatever space is available within the premises.

The staff:

There were two workers at the center, and they did have a teacher earlier, but that person had left and they were going to appoint another one soon.

The children:

Around 15 children attended the center, including a few girls. Most children were migrants mainly from northern and eastern states. Children reported that they migrated because parents did not have livelihood opportunities there. Fathers are either self-employed or work in construction, factories or shops.

Most of the children spoke Bhojpuri but understand Hindi.

Workers mentioned that there is a lot of peer pressure among children. The influencers among children control other children. If he says no, the others will not do it.

Services provided:

Since many of the children were drop outs, the services provided included Education as per the level reached by the child, Nutrition, making of identity documents to facilitate admission in schools. 45 children have been enrolled, mostly in Hindi medium schools by SATHI.

Since most children are drop outs, they were being taught alphabets, numbers, etc. They were being taught mostly through rote learning. There were no workbooks/sheets, charts or other learning materials at the center.

It was observed that there was individual attention given to each child and their progress was different depending on age and level reached. However, learning was not structured, keeping in view the overall development of children, even though activities of recreation, sports etc. were organized regularly.

Challenges:

Workers reported that there was alcoholism in the family. Since many parents were seasonal migrants, they were not interested in making documents here.

Even if they admitted children in schools, they were irregular or didn't go. Schools were also not ready to take them as they dropped out in between.

They tried to admit children in AWCs but there too, there is a fixed quota for children. These children being irregular, AWWs are not willing to enroll them. The reason being that any drop out from the center would affect the AWWs' performance review.

Staff reported that boys were more engaged in violence as compared to girls.

Contact with CWC:

They refer runaway children identified at railway stations, etc. to the CWC. Children included complete orphans or single parent.

The workers often get requests from parents to put them in hostels as controlling them is difficult. However, due to gate keeping by CWC, admission to CCI was difficult.

Observation:

- At the center, curriculum was individualized, but there is mainly rote learning.
- There were no learning aids like activity books, flash cards, puzzles, etc. to keep children engaged. There was no structured daily schedule. A variety of activities keeping in view different aspects of development is required.
- There is no grant from Government, so sustainability could be an issue.
- Need for training of teachers and community workers was identified.
- There was also no clarity about MIS. MIS in charge not aware of impact indicators related to the project.

6.2.3 Focus Group Discussion with ARC Members

Action on the Rights of the child (ARC) is a Pune based network of NGOs, with the concerns being protection, education, sexual abuse, migrant children, child beggars and other vulnerable children, as they relate to CNCP.



There were about 25 members of ARC attending the meeting, and the gist of the discussion during the meeting is as follows:

1. Causes of phenomenon related to street connected children:

- **Documentation barriers**
 - Migrants often avoid obtaining documents to maintain ties with their native place.
 - Birth certificates are a major hurdle for accessing anganwadis and school admissions.
- **Child exploitation**
 - Children are often exploited directly or used as sources of income by parents.
 - **Begging practices:**
 - Maiming, drugging, and masked begging (selling small items like toys, fruits, flowers, then asking for money if refused).
 - Adults often supervise from a distance, collecting money while giving children only a small share.
 - Sometimes exploitation is by non-parents.
 - **Traditional occupations:** Certain communities use children in gymnastics, indirectly linked to begging.
 - **Trafficking:** The number of trafficked children has reduced in recent years.

2. Quality of Life affecting street connected children:

- **Housing**
 - Constant fear of eviction.
 - High payments for toilet use.
- **Nutrition and hygiene**

- Parents often buy cheap food instead of cooking, leading to poor nutrition.
- General lack of hygiene and sanitation.

3. Hotspots

- Meldakka station
- Corporation Area
- Wakad
- Katraj
- Hadapsar
- All major traffic signals
- Dhyri, Sinhagad Road

4. Challenges

- **Education barriers**
 - Schools refuse admission to migrant children.
 - NGOs approaching police are asked to file FIRs first. Many of them do not want to take that responsibility, so avoid action related to children's exploitation.
 - To reduce dropout statistics, migrant children are sometimes not admitted at all by the schools.
- **Policy and accountability gaps**
 - No clear ownership, policy, or accountability for children's issues by the Government.
 - Work conditions of children are generally not labelled as 'hazardous,' thus limiting action.
 - Reluctance to record cases to avoid government scrutiny.
- **Childline and reporting issues**
 - Merger of Childline with 112 led to reduced human resources, affecting reach out to children.
 - Fewer cases are reported; earlier children themselves reported, now referrals are mostly through NGOs or citizens.
- **Institutional weaknesses**
 - NIPCCD's training role is missing.
 - Vacancies in DCPUs; existing staff is overloaded with multiple responsibilities.

5. Key Observations by the ARC Members

- Children face systemic barriers in documentation, education, and protection.
- Exploitation persists in varied forms, though trafficking has declined.
- Weak institutional capacity and lack of accountability hinder effective child protection.
- Hotspots are concentrated around transit points, urban signals, and corporation areas.

5.2.4 Interview with Coordinator, Sarva Seva Sangh

1. Organization Overview

Sarva Seva Sangh in Pune located at Vadgaon Sheri, Pune was established 28 years ago. The **Focus Groups of intervention** are:

- Street Children
- Parents with Terminal Illness

2. Key Programs and Activities

2.1 Child-Centered Interventions

- Mobile Schools (daily one-hour sessions at multiple points)
- Doorstep schools and support classes (with Identity Foundation, Doorstep School)
- Counselling and motivation for school attendance
- Temporary hostel facilities for children from unstable environments
- Tuition support and life skills education
- Recreational activities: picnics, talent shows
- Safe spaces for expression

2.2 Family and Parent Support

- Counselling and motivation for parents
- De-addiction counselling and linkages to centres
- Assistance with essential documents (ration cards, IDs)
- Adult literacy programs
- Exposure to micro-enterprises and training opportunities
- Support for starting small businesses

2.3 Advocacy and Awareness

- Awareness on child rights and child protection
- Street plays, group sessions, signature drives, marathons
- Distribution of educational materials
- Networking with police, civil authorities, and labor department
- Raids and inspections to stop child labor and begging
- Capacity building workshops for teachers, police, railway staff, and social workers

3. Communities and Work Areas

- **Communities Served:** Pardhi, Nat, Barshi, NT-DNT groups, migrants from Delhi and Rajasthan
- **Livelihood Patterns:**

- Seasonal work (flowers during Hindu festivals, balloons during Christmas, flags/caps during Independence Day)
- Micro-enterprises (jewelry making, tailoring, cloth bags)
- **Children’s Engagement:**
 - Begging at traffic signals (5–6 children per hotspot)
 - Participation in micro-enterprises
- **Geographical Coverage:**
 - 191 traffic signals identified (Market Yard, Katraj, Shanker Sheth Road, Camp, Kalyani Nagar, Viman Nagar, IT Parks)
 - Mobile vans at Lohegaon (2 points) and Viman Nagar (2 points)

4. Operational Details

- **Staff Strength:** 8 workers (3 always in the field)
- **Partnerships:** Doorstep School, Identity Foundation
- **Challenges:**
 - Children run away when police arrive (informant networks)
 - ICDS not accessible
 - Ration discontinuation if not collected for 3 months
 - Migrants reluctant to make local ration cards (prefer origin-based identity)

5. Recommendations

- Improve document procedures for interventions
- Address ration issues (continuity despite non-collection)
- Strengthen ONOR (One Nation One Ration) scheme for migrants
- Expand safe housing solutions for street families

7. Hotspots of Street-Connected Children in PMC & PCMC

Spatial distribution describes where these hotspots were. **A detailed study on hotspots would require much more time as well as financial and human resources. This would also lead to a lot of duplication of effort. Therefore, findings by major studies (Tribhuvan et al 2023; PMC and Rainbow Homes 2017) have been used below to get an understanding of hotspots across PMC and PCMC areas. The stakeholders interviewed have also added insights to available data and have been included in the report.**

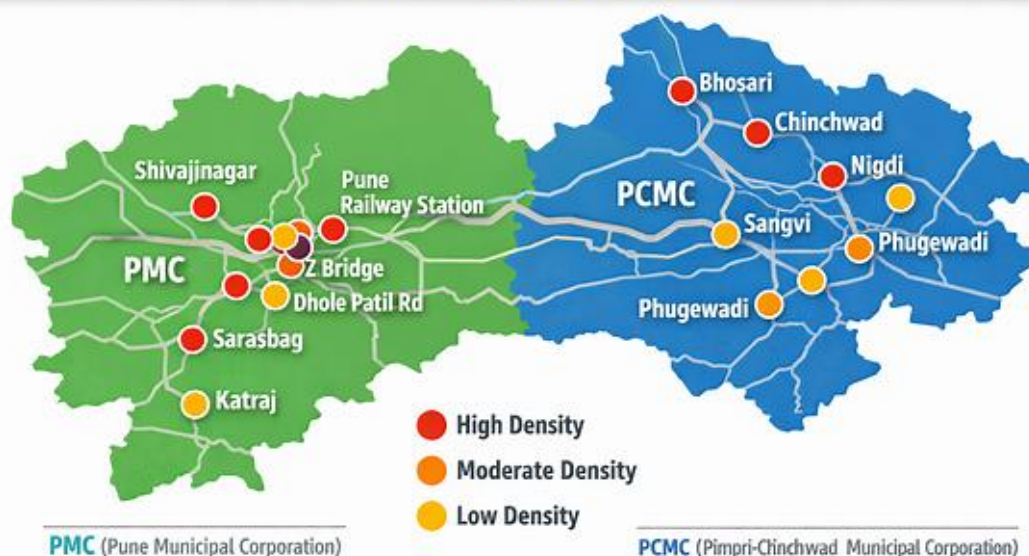
Definition

- **Hotspot:** Area where 5 or more children are working together.
- **Study Basis:** Findings from Tribhuvan et al. (2023) and PMC & Rainbow Homes (2017), supplemented by stakeholder interviews.
- **Sample Size:** 543 children (420 from PMC, 123 from PCMC).

Common Hotspot Locations

Boys	Girls	Other Shared Hotspots
Railway stations	Railway stations	Bus stands
Under bridges/flyovers	Bus stands	Temples
Bus stands	Temples	Construction sites
Temples (begging, small jobs)	—	Dumping yards
Traffic signals (begging)	—	Slum areas (dropouts/irregular children)

Street Children Hotspots in Pune & Pimpri-Chinchwad



Common Activities of Street Connected Children

- Construction work
- Begging
- Street vending (balloons, lemons & chillies)
- Working in tea stalls/hotels
- Domestic work
- Rag picking
- Sex work & children of sex workers
- Transgender children's activities

Ward-wise Distribution of Street Connected Children

PMC (Pune Municipal Corporation):

- **Highest concentration:** Dhankawadi (15.23%), Shivajinagar (13.57%), Bibwewadi (12.14%)
- **Lowest concentration:** Kothrud (0.47%), Yerwada (0.71%)

PCMC (Pimpri-Chinchwad Municipal Corporation):

- **Highest concentration:** Sangvi Zone (14.63%), Bhosari Zone (13%), Phugewadi Zone (13%)
- **Lowest concentration:** Pimpri Zone (1.6%), Thergaon-Wakad (2.63%)

Specific Locations Identified

High Density Areas

- Bhosari, Chinchwad, Nigdi, Sangavi, Shivajinagar-Ghole Road, Dhankwadi, Sahakarnagar

Moderate Density Areas

- Chikhali, Moshi, Phugewadi, Aundh-Baner, Bibwewadi, Wanwadi-Ramtekdi

Low Density Areas

- Kiwale, Akurdi, Manapabhavan, Nagar Road, Wadgaon Sheri, Dhole Patil Road, Warje, Karvenagar, Sinhgad Road

Very Low- Density Areas

- Talawade, Charoli, Kalas, Dhanori, Pimpri, Thergaon, Wakad

Major Hotspots in Pune City

- **Railway Stations:** Pune, Shivajinagar, Khadki
- **Bus Stops:** Nigdi, PMC Bus Stop
- **Bridges:** Z Bridge, Bhide Bridge
- **Markets:** Juna Bajar, Pimpri Market
- **Temples & Flyovers**
- **Other Notable Spots:** Sarasbag, P.L. Deshpande Garden, Dinosaur Garden, Katraj Snake Park, Wonder City

Additional Hotspots Listed

- Meldakka Station
- Corporation Area
- Wakad

- Katraj
- Hadapsar
- All major traffic signals
- Dhyri, Sinhgad Road

8. The constraints and challenges while working with the group of Street Connected Children:

There are many challenges for those working with street connected children and they need to be addressed in order to reach out effectively to this group of vulnerable children.

Overall, these can be classified as:

Field-level challenges

1. Widespread poverty, unemployment, increasing rural-urban migration, attraction of city life and lack of political will to address increasing numbers of children on the streets
2. Parents perceiving children as economic assets and not giving attention to their developmental needs
3. Migrant parents not wanting children's identification such as birth certificates in the place of destination as they do not want to lose their roots
4. Anganwadis and schools being reluctant to admit children due to fear of being penalized if the reports show drop outs
5. Children (especially tribal) not adjusting to closed institutions
6. Due to gate keeping by CWCs, some children who want to go back do not get admission in institutions and are forced to go back to their families
7. Lack of sensitivity of the authorities while carrying out forced evictions leading to Street children are subject to malnutrition, hunger, health problems, substance abuse, theft, commercial sex exploitation, harassment by the city police and railway authorities, and physical and sexual abuse, displacement of children and families.

Institutional constraints (such as funding, coordination, or policy gaps)

1. There is no ease of accessing social protection schemes for many of the marginalized groups including unorganized sector workers and migrant workers.
2. Closing down of Childline in its original form has led to fewer number of cases reported. Also, children are now not self-reporting as they used to earlier of implementation and monitoring mechanisms for programs
3. As reported, only two of the DCPU vacancies out of 12 are filled. Therefore, there is lack of rescue, rehabilitation and monitoring of programs
4. Bringing ICPS under Mission Vatsalya and merging Open shelters with CCIs has diluted the focus of interventions, taking away the freedom of children to access or not access services.
5. Community based approach is completely lost now.

6. The lack of commitment on the part of the Government revealed through inadequacy of budget allocation which in turn has a negative impact on the sustainability of projects and, in particular, on the ability of the NGOs or Government Departments to employ qualified and experienced social workers to manage projects for street children.
7. Involvement of Police is limited mainly for CNCP cases. They only attend to CCL cases where their intervention is mandatory

Lack of Support to Special Needs Street Connected Children:

1. Many street connected children are addicted to substances like Gutkha, Ganja and other kinds of drugs. These children do it also because of tremendous pressure from peers. They need special deaddiction programs such as special 21-day camps organized by SATHI.
2. Even among slum population, many children are involved in playing games, viewing pornographic sites, etc. They do this with or without spending money or gambling. A specialized, comprehensive approach is required to identify, treat and rehabilitate such children.

Addressing Special needs of Girls:

1. Although the number of street connected girls identified by various sources for treatment and rehabilitation are very low compared to boys, the dangers faced by girls are far more dangerous than in the case of boys.
2. Sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, child marriage, physical and emotional violence, etc. is much more common among girls than among boys.
3. Many girls are also lured by urban life, cinema, luxurious life and fashion and leave home in search of a 'better' world, not knowing about the dangers of living life without support. Thus, they land on street.
4. Some also fall into the trap after online dating and pornography. Such issues need to be addressed.

Lack of coordinated MIS:

1. Unlike earlier, the agencies do not have access to Government's Trackchild Portal. This makes continuum of care difficult in the case of children already reached.
2. Tracing missing children is also difficult.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COORDINATED ACTION ON STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN

A coordinated action plan is recommended mainly based on the perspective of SDGs and Social Protection Floor concepts, both accepted at the international and national level.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

From the Global perspective, **Five Action Areas (Recommendations) related to fulfilment of SDGs are suggested**¹⁸, with the focus on Multi-sectoral Action, with the principle of Leaving No Child Behind. The areas are:

1. Enhance Social Protection, End Poverty & Prevent Family Separation
2. Strengthen Child Protection Policies, Programmes & Services
3. Invest in Evidence and Data
4. Focus on Cities and Local Governance
5. Improve Educational Outcomes & Skills Development



Social Protection Floors:

SDGs also emphasize building of strong Social Protection Floors which comprise those measures which aim at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. ILO's Recommendation 202 (Para. 2), adopted unanimously in the 2012 International Labour Conference (ILC) describes social protection floors as **"nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion."**¹⁹

India has ratified the above and needs to implement the same with the recommended policy and financial dimensions. The dimensions identified are: Children's education, nutritional status and health, Employment and Livelihood Security, Social Pensions including National Social Assistance Programme, Social

¹⁸ Transformative Action to Accelerate Results for Children in Street Situations in the Decade of Action [2020–2030] Technical Guidance

¹⁹ A social protection floor for India / Ravi S. Srivastava; International Labour Office, ILO DWT for South Asia and ILO Country Office for India - New Delhi: ILO, 2013

Health Protection, Food Security and Housing. The creation of a Social Protection Floor can have dramatic consequences for the lives of the poor, macroeconomic stability, growth and development. It can lead to socially inclusive and sustainable growth and progressive realization of human rights.

Broad focus Areas	Details	Responsible stakeholders
Enhance Social Protection, End Poverty & Prevent Family Separation	• Accessing all social protection schemes listed under SPF is extremely difficult, and needs to be enhanced through relaxation in norms. E.g. migrant street connected children are not admitted in anganwadis and schools as teachers feel they would be penalized if children go back or are irregular. Also, as in the law, there needs to be flexibility in admission, even if children do not have required documentation. • Access to ration cards, shelters for homeless in urban areas, housing facilities need to be provided. • Smooth interstate migration support	DWCD, Labour Department, School Education and Skill Development Department, Social Justice Department, Food and Civil Supplies Department, Urban Development Department, Gram Panchayats
Strengthen Child Protection Policies, Programmes & Services	• Bring back open shelter concept as in the ICPS earlier. Under MV, open shelters have been merged with CCIs, making them closed institutions. • Large number of vacancies in DCPUs need to be filled, as monitoring of programmes, preparation of Social Investigation Reports and many other functions of various categories of functionaries are not getting performed. • Need a decentralized approach to child protection as in Childline. The Child Helpline staff is too limited to reach out to children in distress. • Non-institutional, family strengthening programmes such as foster care, sponsorship need to be expanded as alternatives to institutional care. • Programmes related to prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of working children need to be strengthened, adopting multisectoral interventions.	DWCD, NGOs, Police, NGOs, Department of Labour
Adequate provision for care and support of	• Deaddiction centres need to be provided. • Identification of addicted children at the community level and a camp approach	Department of Health, DWCD, NGOs

special needs children	with family involvement needs to be provided. • Special attention needs to be given to screen addiction as well as Gaming.	
Community-Based Prevention and rehabilitation	• Phirte Pathak programme needs to be implemented on a sustainable basis. Continuum of care needs to be followed, once the children are identified through mobile units. • Community learning centres for street connected children need to be implemented with a comprehensive approach. • Public awareness campaigns need to be organized to reduce stigma and encourage citizen participation.	DWCD, Department of Health, School Education, Skill Development, NGOs, Civil Society Groups
Street connected Girls	Girls being even more vulnerable than boys, programmes related to violence against girls, prevention of child marriage, physical and sexual health need to be organized for protection of adolescent girl children.	DWCD, Department of School Education, Skill Development, Gram Panchayats, Police Department
Evidence building and MIS	• Develop robust baselines and local data collection. • Include street connected children in research safely. • Make Track Child Portal accessible to all to develop a strong data base • Improve reporting on SDG indicators relevant to child rights.	MWCD, DWCD, Academic institutions, NGOs, NIC, Department of Planning (for SDGs)
Improve Educational Outcomes & Skills Development	• Be more flexible and inclusive in education, especially for migrant street connected children. • Design comprehensive curriculum for school drop outs through Community Learning Centres to facilitate mainstream education of street connected children	Department of Education, DWCD, NGOs, community based Groups
Partnerships and Governance	Strengthen partnerships between NGOs and government programmes and community-based approaches.	NGOs and Networks, All Government Depts
Law and Protection	• Strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders, especially developing SOPs for police. • Provide need-based support to children in conflict with law (CCL)	Police Department, DWCD,

V: CONCLUSION

The intensive project work undertaken over the past three months—through in-depth analysis and sustained engagement with diverse stakeholders—has yielded valuable insights spanning field realities, research evidence, and policy perspectives. This report aspires to stand apart from conventional documentation by serving as a practical reference for field workers, a resource for policy influencers, and a foundation for academicians. It is intended to catalyse future coordinated action for the protection and empowerment of street-connected children.