

Insights from the 7-day Rescue Drive Program at the New Delhi Railway Station

27th March - 2nd April 2023

New Delhi railway station (NDLS) is one the largest and busiest stations in India with 16 platforms and passage of more than 730 trains departing and arriving every day. Presently 3 organisations (SATHI, SBT, and Prayaas Railway Station) are working on the railway platforms and around 250 children per month. We had meeting with Railway authorities, RPF, GRP, CWC and discussed the situation of the children landing on the railway platforms of New Delhi railway station. Altogether decided to conduct a 24X7 rescue drive to understand the present inflow trends of children on the railway station and extrapolate the results to assess the overall situation. A similar rescue drive was last conducted before the covid pandemic in 2018.

Survey objectives

The primary objectives of the survey are as follows:

- Post Covid, understanding the inflow of runaway and separated children arriving at New Delhi Railway station.
- Rescue children found to be in need of care and protection and transfer them to a safe shelter.
- Assessing the reach of the present interventions and recommend actions to help more children at and around the station.

Survey methodology

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following approach was used:

- Deploying a team of 68 outreach workers and volunteers across 3 shifts to cover all 16 platforms of the station round the clock for 7 days.
- Contacting, identifying and bringing lost, runaway and unaccompanied children to a temporary help desk provided by the railways and managed by counsellors and trained NGO staff for first level interaction and assessing the reasons for the child to be on the station.
- Transferring children identified as those in need of care and protection to suitable shelter or CCI as per CWC direction.
- To minimize traveling for the rescued children we organized medical care through railway doctors and held CWC sittings on the railway station itself for all the 7 days.

Support and Involvement of Multiple Stakeholders

This joint rescue drive was successfully planned and executed with the support of the following collaborators and stakeholders:

- Child Welfare Committee and Chairperson for organising CWC sitting at railway station which helped us resettle the rescued children at the earliest.
- Railway authorities (DRM, ADRM and Station Director) provided the 2 rooms on the railway station for temporary help desk and also provided food, water, snacks for rescued children and the staff. A railway doctor provided general medical checkup for rescued children on site.

- RPF deputed 6 staff for rescue of children and GRP supported DD entry and medical check up of rescued girl children.
- Two NGOs Salaam Baalak Trust and Prayaas provided their staff for outreach in all 3 shifts. They also provided vehicles and staff for transferring and sheltering children rescued from the platform. SBT additionally, provided food for the children and staff during the night.

Cost of Executing the Rescue Drive

Considering the expenses during the rescue operations at the railway station and transportation of rescued children to shelters, the cost incurred is nearly Rs. 2000 per child rescued. This excludes the cost of caring for the children at the shelters till they are resettled.

Summary of findings

- 409 children were rescued in 7 days. This indicates that the inflow of children at New Delhi railway station is 57 per day or nearly 1700 per month, approximately 20,000 per year.
- Out of 409 children rescued, 38 were girls. This indicates that inflow of girls could be around 150 per month or approximately 1800 per year.
- Majority of the children landing on the station are between the ages 14 to 16 years.
- The highest percentages of children who arrive at New Delhi station are from Bihar (216), Uttar Pradesh (96), Delhi (32), Jharkhand (18) and Haryana (15). Children from these states account for 90% of the rescued children.
- Our data shows that the highest numbers of children were rescued in a 6 hour window (6:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.) during the 1st shift everyday.

Settlement of children

- Out of 409 children, 192 children were handed over to their parents who lived in Delhi or nearby cities and could come to the railway station on the same day.
- 217 children were transferred to shelter homes for care and protection as per the order of the CWC. SATHI, SBT and Prayaas are working to resettle these children at the earliest.

Insights and Call for Action

Today, 3 NGOs together are rescuing nearly 250 children per month. During the rescue drive we have observed that the inflow of the children is nearly 1700 per month. We are currently helping only 15% of the children in need with the staff and resources that the NGOs currently have. We need to deploy substantially more staff members in order to help the maximum number of children.

Such rescue drives help us understand the total number of children in need arriving at a particular railway station. This information helps us plan the scale of our activities and advocate on behalf of these children to strengthen the system set up to help them. SATHI plans to conduct more frequent rescue drives in New Delhi and other locations in the coming few months to demonstrate the scale of the issue to the Government authorities and other NGOs.

News Coverage

- Times of India - [409 runaway kids rescued from New Delhi railway station in 7-day drive](#)
- NDTV - [400 Children Rescued From Delhi Railway Station, Sent To Child Care Homes](#)
- India Today - [34 girls among 400 children rescued from New Delhi Railway Station](#)

Case Studies

Case 1

We rescued a 15-year-old boy, a resident of Delhi and a student at Delhi Public School. He was found alone at the New Delhi railway station during the rescue drive. After interacting with the child we came to know that his final exam results were announced recently and he got 90% marks. His father, however, was not happy with his marks. The boy was sad due to his father's reaction and decided to run away from home and go to his grandmother's house in his native village in Bihar.

We counseled the child and explained the trouble he could get into while traveling alone without informing his parents. He agreed to give us his father's contact number. Once he was comfortable with us, he shared that he had taken nearly Rs. 25,000 from his home while running away. We ensured that the money was kept safe. When we contacted the boy's father, he told us that he had no idea that the child was at the railway station. He thought his son had gone to play in the park.

We called his father to the railway station and counseled him. We made him understand his words and his abrupt reaction to the exam results had affected his son deeply. We also discussed how the children can be sensitive and he needs to communicate in a loving and caring manner. After verifying the father's identity and counseling both the father and the son, we sent the boy home along with the money he had brought.

Case 2

We rescued a 15 year old girl during the rescue drive. Initially, she told us that her parents had died and that she is married and lives in Panipat with her husband. She had come to Delhi to visit her sick sister. She also told us that she is returning to Panipat and she was waiting for her husband at the station. Our team members suspected that she was hiding something when she was not able to produce any of her or her husband's ID or proof of her marriage.

After counseling the girl, she showed us her phone which had the Aadhaar card of the girl's parents. After some time, the girl confirmed that her parents were alive and also gave their phone numbers. We spoke to her mother and called her to the station. The girl's mother told that all of them live in Panipat and work in a mask factory. The girl was facing some psychological issues and got emotional quickly. We learnt that the mother had beaten the girl a day before and that's why the girl ran away from the home in anger. We made the mother understand that she should send the girl for counseling and treat her with patience. After verifying the IDs of both the mother and the girl and after completing both their counseling, the girl was sent home with her mother.

Case 3

We rescued a group of 6 boys with ages ranging from 9 - 16 years. They all had traveled from a village near Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh to New Delhi. They did not engage with us in the beginning and were instead speaking with some unknown person on their phone.

After rescuing them and counseling them individually, we learnt that they were all from poor families, they did not go to schools and had come to Delhi for work. They did not know where they were going to work or what they were going to do. They had come to Delhi on a promise of

Rs. 9000 per month salary. One of the boys was given the phone number of an unknown person by someone in their village. They were supposed to call him when they reached New Delhi railway station.

All 6 boys were produced to the Child Welfare Committee. Considering their young age and the fact that they were coming to work all by themselves for some unknown person, the CWC referred the boys to be housed in a Child Care Institute temporarily. We are trying to locate the boys' families. Once they are located and their IDs verified, they will be counseled and if the CWC finds them fit to care for the children, they will all be reunited.

Photos from the Field

