

**STREET DWELLING CHILDREN ACROSS MUMBAI AND A CASE STUDY OF NON-  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE  
WORKING TOWARDS IT**

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**Abstract**

This paper is a qualitative study of the condition of street-dwelling children in Mumbai, and various reasons that lead them to be on the street and a case study of a Non-Governmental Organization (Community Development Centre). It is working to provide shelter to street-dwelling children from on the street, off the street, and abandoned street children. Its various challenges while dealing with these children and influencing them to approach their centre for rehabilitation, then the legal process. Apart from the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter, children are provided both formal and informal education. Street children are admitted to BMC schools and they are taught different skills. During all this process, a lot of challenges are faced by NGOs, like socio-economic challenges, raising funds, etc. All these challenges limit the work of NGOs.

**Key words:** Case Study, street dwelling children, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Development Centre, challenges

**Introduction**

Street children, as defined by the United Nations (UN), are children working or living on the street, whose families are on the street, or children who've run away from their families and are living on the streets. While there is no recently published data found, UNICEF estimated in 2000 that there were 18 million street children in India, which is the highest in the world. Away from their basic needs and opportunities, they are deprived of family care and protection and face abuse, neglect, and death. Out of 18 million street children in India, 37059 street children are present in Mumbai city, which is one of the highest in India.

In this scenario, P. Christopher, Secretary cum Director of Community Development Centre in Dharavi, Mumbai, initially focused on helping the elderly but faced challenges due to criminalization in the area. They then established the Goodwill Society by the church to shelter the homeless, but the presence of mafia and drug dealers led them to shift their focus to children. Witnessing the plight of generations suffering from homelessness, exacerbated by events like the Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 and the Bombay bomb blasts in 1993, they took action. On the International Day for Children in 1997, they rehabilitated 1000 homeless children. To prevent children from engaging in illegal activities, a night care shelter was initiated to provide them with a safe environment. This led to the formation of an NGO registered in 2004. They deal with street children of age group 0-18 years. Community Development Centre is known for its diverse services including charitable trusts, educational support, orphanages, and aid for women, food, and clothing.

## Literature Review

**Elliott P. Niboye (2013)** in his research paper **Effectiveness of non- Governmental organization in the rehabilitation of street children experience from selected NGOs in Dar salaam Tanzania** has discussed that NGOs use various criteria to select children for rehabilitation, including interviews, medical check-ups, and counseling for behavioral change. They also locate families for reunification and provide formal and informal education through vocational training and talent development programs. Funding from donor agencies, private companies, individuals, and some government support enables these services. However, NGOs face challenges such as lack of community and government support, poor working conditions, and the rehabilitates.

**Annie Kuruvilla (Associated professor) & Jigisha Rathod (M.Sc. student) (2016)** in his research paper **capacity building of NGO workers of open shelters in Vadodara city with regards to health and nutrition** has discussed that Government of Gujarat in year 2015 launched initiative to start open shelter for homeless orphan children in cities of Gujarat and Vadodara. Don Bosco shehalaya was given the responsibility to run this NGO, to lead and open shelter for children and improve nutritional status along with health and hygiene status of vulnerable disadvantages children. Various health and medical camps were arranged to know the status of children based on data begin 3 training modules namely to improve knowledge level regarding key wash, nutrition and health issues where designed and translated into a local language. Through PowerPoint presentation and skill building session on calculating BMI under nutrition and dental problem were seen in almost 93% children. Skin problem was seen in 43% children, knowledge of children related to wash was good as compared to a nutrition or health issue. Capacity building programme helped in sustain improvement in knowledge level in all 3 domains namely wash, nutrition and health

**Francis A Kombarakaran (2004)** in his research Review **Street children of Bombay: their stresses and strategies of coping strategies of coping by using multimethod approach** including depth interviews, group discussions, informal interviews, and case studies with 73 participants. The study revealed that street children face numerous challenges in finding food, safety, employment, shelter, and medical care. They rely on peers and non-governmental organizations for support. A significant portion (62.5%) of these children are migrants from other states, often moving between cities and states due to various factors such as harassment, fear of punishment, festivals, influence of friends, weather conditions, safety concerns, and the promise of better opportunities.

**Amit Sen** in his research **Street children in India: A non-government organization -based intervention model**, Amit Sen discusses the impact of the award-winning film "Slumdog Millionaire" in drawing attention to the plight of street children in India. Collaborating with psychiatrist Amit Sen, the film portrayed the struggles and hopes of street children in Delhi. Sen's paper explores the efforts of both government and non-government organizations in addressing this issue, along with an overview of national and international policies related to street children. Additionally, Sen outlines his own clinical efforts to rehabilitate these children, highlighting the challenges encountered in implementing such programs.

In the article **Street children: The neglected pathology** explained under the **challenges on the street and policy shortcomings**: The economic crisis and extreme poverty are common push factor of creating more street children. According to a report, 356 million children i.e. 17.5% children live in extreme poverty, which means existing on less than U.S \$1.90 a day. Unemployment, poverty, violence at home, family disintegration, lack of shelter, rural-urban migration, displacement due to flood or other calamity these are the factors in increase number of street children.

## Research Objectives:

### Broad Objective:

To understand the problem of street dwelling children across Mumbai and the case study of NGO Community Development Centre working towards it.

### Specific Objective:

- To understand the problem of street children across Mumbai.

- To understand how Community Development Centre identify and pick children from the street.
- To understand project/ initiatives / taken by Community Development Centre for the empowerment of street children.

### Research Methodology

As present paper is about the street dwelling children and a case study of NGO Community Development Centre both primary and secondary data has been used to come up with findings of paper.

#### Primary Sources:

Interviewed P. Christopher, Secretary cum Director of Community Development Centre through open ended questionnaire.

#### Secondary Sources:

- Reviewing the existing literature available on this topic through online sources such as JSTOR, NLIST, Google scholar, etc. and library research
- Analyzing the reports published by Organizations and the Government.
- secondary data has referred and used from various printed and social media like newspaper, magazine, government websites, research articles etc.

### Data Collection:

**Table 1.1: Number Of Children Found Across the BMC Wards**

<u>Sr. no.</u>	<u>BMC Ward</u>	<u>AREAS</u>	<u>Ward Description from Field Notes of Enumerators</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Area (Sq. kms)</u>	<u>Density per Sq. Km</u>
1	A	Churchgate, CST	Ballard Estate, Lokmanya Tilak Marg, Marine Drive, Colaba	556 2.18%	346 3.21%	902 2.49%	12.5	72
2	B	Masjid Bandar, Sandhurst Road	P D' Mello Road, Abdul Rehman Street, Ramchandra Bhatt Marg LT Marg	985 3.87%	357 3.32%	1342 3.66%	2.47	543
3	C	Marine Lines, Charni Road	Abdul Rahman Street, Netaji Road, Maulana Shaukatali Road, Marine Drive	467 1.83%	233 2.16%	700 1.93%	1.78	393
4	D	Grant Road, Mumbai Central	VP Road, Walkeshwar, Tardeo Road, Bhuleshwar Naka	1647 6.48%	665 6.18%	2312 6.39%	6.63	349
5	E	Byculla, Reay Road	Reay Road, Sane Guruji Marg, Dattaram Lad Marg, Wadi Bunder	954 3.75%	496 4.61%	1450 4.01%	7.4	196
6	F North	Matunga, Dadar East, Wadala	Thane creek, NS Mankikar Marg	1343 5.28%	692 6.43%	2035 5.62%	12.98	145
7	F South	Elphinstone Road,	Sewri, Kala Chowky	1276 5.02%	684 6.36%	1960 5.42%	14	151

8	G North	Dadar west Mahim	Sion, Dharavi, Mahim Causeway	1682 6.62%	622 5.78%	2304 6.37%	10	230
9	G South	Mahalaxmi, Lower Parel, Sewri	Kashinath Dhuru Marg	415 1.63%	217 2.01%	632 1.74%	9.07	70
10	H East	Bandra East, Khar East, Santacruz East	Santacruz East, Vile Parle, Mahim Causeway	1100 4.32%	448 4.16%	1548 4.28%	13.53	114
11	H West	Bandra West, Khar West, Santacruz West	Bandra, Khar	913 3.59%	351 3.26%	1264 3.49%	11.55	109
12	K East	Vile Parle East, Andheri East, Jogeshwari East	Airport	590 2.32%	326 3.03%	916 2.53%	23.5	39
13	K West	Vile Parle, West Andheri, West Jogeshwari West	Oshiwara Bridge	1101 4.33%	543 5.05%	1644 4.54%	23.29	71
14	L	Kurla	Ghatkopar, Vikhroli, Powai, Sion Creek	1802 7.09%	470 4.37%	2272 6.28%	13.46	169
15	M East	Govandi, Mankhurd	Deonar Dumping Ground, BARC	1402 5.51%	404 3.75%	1806 4.99%	32.5	56
16	M West	Chembur	Chembur, Ghatkopar, Eastern Express highway	950 3.73%	349 3.24%	1299 3.59%	19.5	67
17	N Ward	Ghatkopar	Thane Creek, Vikhroli Hills Ghatkopar	906 3.56%	254 2.36%	1160 3.20%	39	30
18	P North	Malad	Manori, Madh, Marve	1084 4.26%	372 3.46%	1456 4.02%	29.56	49
19	P South	Goregaon	Aarey, Malad Creek, Oshiwara Bridge	914 3.59%	469 4.36%	1383 3.82%	19.13	72
20	R Central	Borivali	Sanjay Gandhi National Park Gorai, Borivali, Dahisar	975 3.83%	458 4.26%	1433 3.96%	50	81

\*Source: <http://www.actionaidindia.org/>

21	R North	Dahisar	Municipal Boundary Creek and Dahisar Check Naka	742 2.92%	406 3.77%	1148 3.17%	18	64
22	R South	Kandivali	Charkop Village, Poisor	645 2.53%	291 2.70%	936 2.58%	17.78	19
23	S	Bhandup Kanjurmarg	Eastern Express Highway, Vikhroli	1933 7.60%	869 8.08%	2802 7.75%	64	44
24	T	Mulund	Vihar Lake, Thane Creek	1024 4.03%	426 3.96%	1450 4.01%	45.41	32
	<b>Total</b>			<b>25406</b>	<b>10748</b>	<b>36154</b>		

- The tables above, **Table 1.1**, During the time of the data collection, 36154 children were detected in all 24 Wards; the greatest number of children (2802) were found in S Ward (Eastern Express Highway, Vikhroli). The largest BMC Ward, S Ward, covers 64 square kilometers.
- The minimal number of children discovered in the G south word is 632. With 70 street children per square kilometer, this district is large.

**Table 1.2: Category Of Street Children**

Types of street children	Boys	Girls	Total
Street Living Children	2435	538	2937
	81.90 %	18.10%	8.02% of total children
Street Working Children	8077	1045	9056
	88.46%	11.54%	24.44% of total children
Children from street Families	14386	9284	24120
	61.51%	38.49%	65.09% of total children
No Response	678	232	910
	74.51%	25.49%	2.46% of total children
<b>Total</b>	<b>25960</b>	<b>11099</b>	<b>35059</b>

\*Source: : <https://www.actionaidindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Mumbai-street-children-V3-Making-Street-Children-Matter1.pdf>

- **Table 1.2** from the above table we can conclude that in total there are 2973 children's living on street out of which 2435 i.e. 81.90% are boys and 538 i.e. 18.10% which form 3<sup>rd</sup> largest group
- There are 9056 street working children out of which 8011 I.e. 88.64% are boys and 104 i.e. 11.54% are girls
- There are 24120 children from street families out of which 14836 i.e. 61.51% are boys and 9284 i.e. 38.49% are girls
- There are in total 910 children from unknown original place out of which 678 i.e. 74.51% are boys and 232 i.e. 25.49% are girls.

### Findings and Discussion:

A Case Study of Ngo Community Development Centre Working for Street Dwelling Children

**Table 1.3: Category Of Street Children in NGO Community Development Centre**

Types of street children	Year 2015	Year 2021	Total
On the street children	450	670	670
	31.03%	33.5%	33.5%
Off the street children	950	1300	1300
	65.51%	65%	65%
Abandoned children	50	30	30
	3.44%	1.5 %	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1450</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2000</b>

P. Christopher, Secretary cum director of a Community Development Centre said that there 3 Category of street children



**On The Street Children:** There is no tie with the parents they live at railways stations, platform, open ground, Infront of shops

**Off The Street Children:** Parents are alive but they hardly visit their home daily at their own will they visit after 3 to 4 days or accordingly when they want to, other day they are involved in illegal activities.

**Abandoned Children:** These children are one who does not have any set of shelter to live in so these children are placed at night care shelter. For such children all other support system is provided.

- From the above table we can say that there are 3 categories of street-dwelling children namely on the street, off the street, Abandoned children.
- In Community Development Centre, there were 450 rehabilitated children from on the street which increased to 670 in the year 2021
- Children from off the street in the year 2015 was 950 which increased to 1300 in the year 2021 from this category the highest children are rehabilitated
- The number of Abandoned children in the year 2015 was 50 which reduced to 30 in the year 2021
- A total of 2000 children are rehabilitated in Community Development Centre.

#### **Organizational Structure:**

The Community Development Centre employs 28 people, with 11 members of the Board of Trustees. P. Christopher, the Secretary and Director of the Community Development Centre, also serves as manager for several functions, such as program manager, among others. Each member of the staff has a distinct task to fulfill. Community Development Centre has constructed Parliament-like structures in each shelter, designating children as President, Prime Minister, Minister of Education, and numerous other positions. This is done to instill a sense of responsibility in the children, foster leadership qualities, and educate them about the role of government.



\*Sources: <https://Community Development Centre-ielc.org/>

#### **Mechanism:**

The staff of Community Development Centre are placed at railways stations and other public gathering places, they identify street children and tried to have dialogue with them, they offer them something in terms of food these are repeated many times, then if child wants, they approach their station poll. Some reveal their identities and some may not. When new street children come for rehabilitation, the NGO has to take legal permission from Child Welfare Committee, a body under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, before rehabilitating any child in their NGO. After every 2 years of rehabilitation 'Social Investigation Reports' are published which survey the condition of the parents of a respective child if any if parent is independent enough to take care of the child by themselves and if not, then that child re-registered at NGO. At district level also 'District Women and Child Committee' keep surveying this NGO.

#### **Reason Why Childrens are on The Street:**

1. Some children run away from home because of the excessive pressure put by their parents
2. Poverty and poor financial condition of the parents led children to be on street

3. Some children ran from their homes to see their favorite actor and actress and the rich life style of Mumbai they decide to stay here but since they have no food to eat and no shelter to live, they are on the street.
4. Some parents have a habit of drinking alcohol and they do not to earn so they force their children for begging and other illegal activities that lead children to be on the street.

### **Challenges Or Problem Faced By NGO:**

NGOs encounter various obstacles when picking up children and fulfilling their needs and amenities for them.

### **Pre-Rehabilitation Challenges**

1. The staff of Community Development Centre are placed at railways station and when they identify and try to dialogue with them police and people suspect the NGO staff that they are trying to influence child for some illegal activities.

### **Post Rehabilitation Challenges Faced By NGO:**

1. Raising fund is the biggest challenge of NGO
2. Lack of community support
3. Takes time to build trust among street children
4. Lots of team and technique is followed to tackle with the children

### **Positive Impact by Intervention Of NGO:**

1. In addition to receiving basic necessities like food, clothing, and housing, the children are also enrolled in a BMC school and given access to both formal and informal education such as vocational courses.
2. Next, if they express interest in continuing their education beyond the age of 14, they are sent to pursue higher education; if not, those who have no interest in education are directed towards apprenticeship and skill-building activities such as driving, plumbing, and other pursuits that provide livelihood in the future.
3. NGO lowers the number of criminal attempts by fostering behavioral changes that help the children feel like regular kids.
4. NGO enrolls people for legal identity cards like Aadhar and Pan cards.

### **Conclusion /Recommendations:**

- Government must conduct survey of street children across India from wards-local governance-districts-division –state government to central government on regular basis.
- Fund must be allocated to the respective states for the welfare of the street children.
- School and colleges should tie-up with NGOs and reserve seats for the street children as a part of Affirmative Action.
- NGOs like Community Development Centre should be popularized so that they avail more funds from individuals, private and public players.
- As per the Supreme Court's ruling in the PUCL Vs. Union of India case (Writ Petition (C) 196 of 2001), shelters for homeless families must be established throughout the city. State governments are required to build 24-hour shelters for the homeless population in all cities with a population of more than 5 lakh, with one shelter with a capacity of 100 per lakh of people.
- This paper will be extended to a quantitative study and a comparative study of different NGOs working for street dwelling children.

### **Limitations:**

This paper is qualitative study based on primary and secondary resources this papers study only one NGO due to time constraints.

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### Appendix:

