

ART OF RESILIENCE

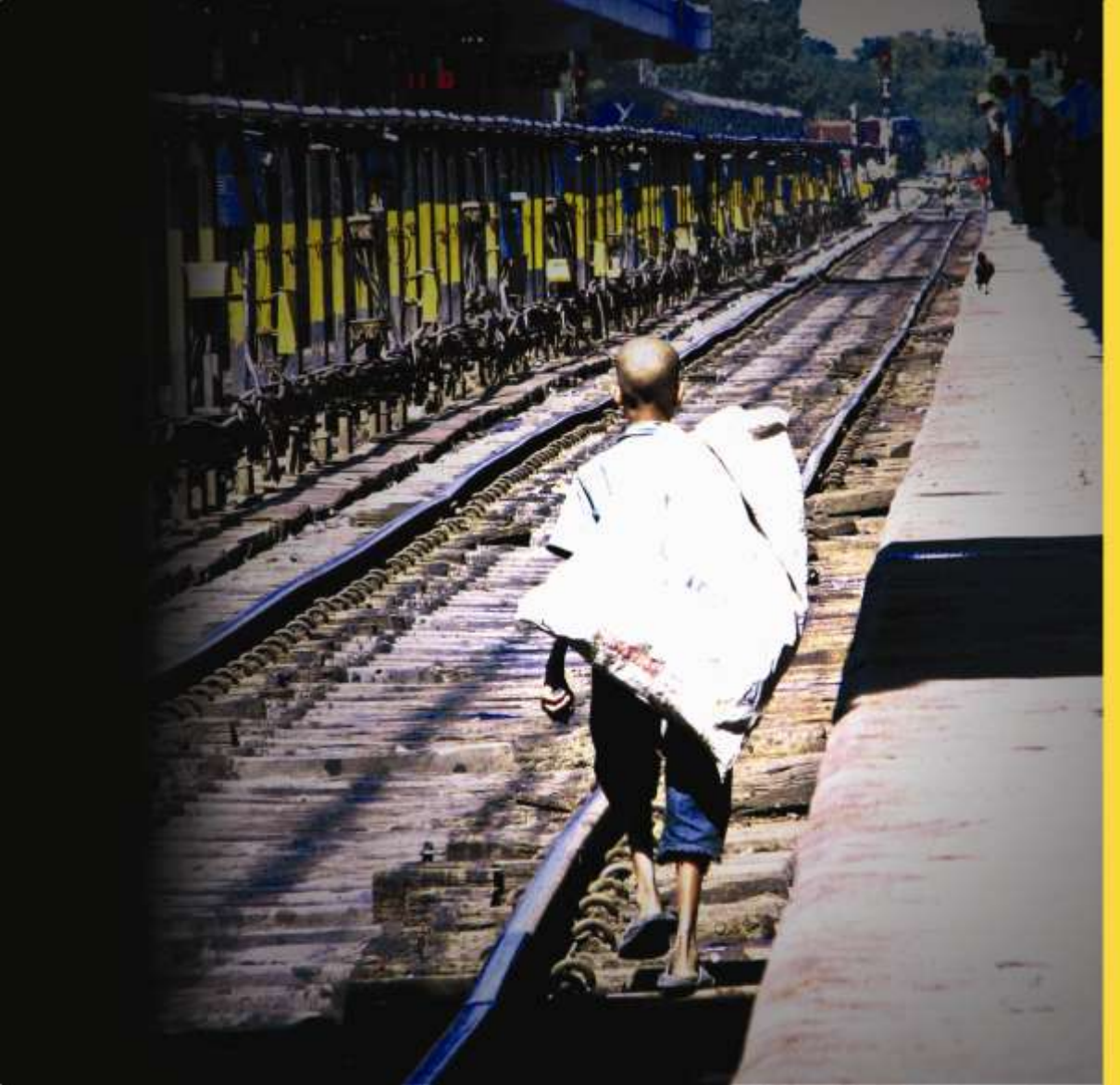
Stories from FXB India Suraksha Railway Children Program @ Jaipur



To the Unknown Child on the railway platform

I speak for those children who cannot speak for themselves,
children who have absolutely nothing but their courage
and their smiles, their wits and their dreams'
(Audrey Hepburn, Actress)

This document was designed, developed and written by Nazia Erum for FXB India Suraksha with factual inputs by Mamta Borgoyary and Lata Singh. All of the photographs were taken with the informed consent of their subjects by the author.



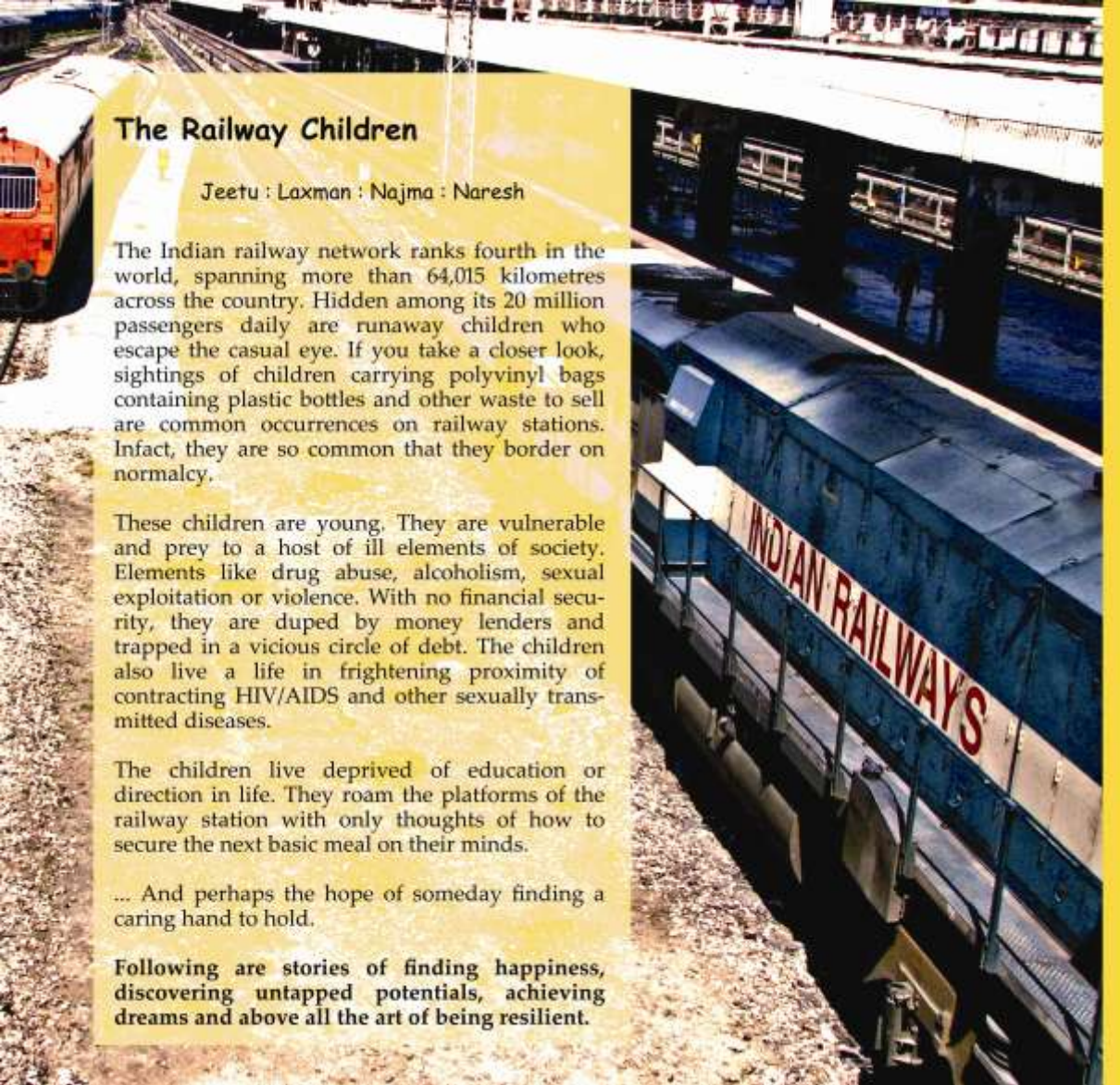
The image shows a golden domed structure, possibly a part of a palace or temple in Jaipur, overlooking a dense urban landscape. The structure is ornate with arched windows and a decorative finial on top. The background shows a vast cityscape with many buildings and a clear sky.

THE CONTEXT

Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh's royal capital Jaipur has held its importance with the shifting sands of time. Today, it is the capital of Rajasthan – the largest state in India and home to a population of over 20 lakh. The Jaipur urban area has grown tremendously in the last three decades. With a growing gemstone and hospitality industry, it's the dream destination for rural migrants, small town labourers and runaway children.

For runaway children, Jaipur is the oasis in the desert state of Rajasthan where they envision a mirage of security, anonymity and a happy life. Instead, they are constantly exposed to abuse, drugs, child labour and forced to seek 'shelter' at the railway platforms. But they survive. They grow. They live. As railway children they show remarkable ingenuity in coping with adverse situations. All they need is a bridge that connects them with child welfare schemes and holds their hand in crossing over to a better life.

That bridge for railway children in Jaipur is FXB India Suraksha's Day Care Centre (DCC).



The Railway Children

Jeetu : Laxman : Najma : Naresh

The Indian railway network ranks fourth in the world, spanning more than 64,015 kilometres across the country. Hidden among its 20 million passengers daily are runaway children who escape the casual eye. If you take a closer look, sightings of children carrying polyvinyl bags containing plastic bottles and other waste to sell are common occurrences on railway stations. Infact, they are so common that they border on normalcy.

These children are young. They are vulnerable and prey to a host of ill elements of society. Elements like drug abuse, alcoholism, sexual exploitation or violence. With no financial security, they are duped by money lenders and trapped in a vicious circle of debt. The children also live a life in frightening proximity of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The children live deprived of education or direction in life. They roam the platforms of the railway station with only thoughts of how to secure the next basic meal on their minds.

... And perhaps the hope of someday finding a caring hand to hold.

Following are stories of finding happiness, discovering untapped potentials, achieving dreams and above all the art of being resilient.

Slumdog Millionaire: Jamat Jeetu

...on how he discovered the FXB Day Care Centre

The records at FXB Day Care Centre (DCC) at Jaipur show that Jeetu or Jeetender is all of twelve years old and has already travelled the length and breadth of the country. Born in the holy city of Ajmer, Jeetu ran away from home at a young age to escape physical abuse from his step-father. He passed off unnoticed in trains as he was small and very young. He did not choose Jaipur as his destination. It was his destiny. Upon arrival in Jaipur he made friends with other street children and they became his 'mentors'. He learnt how to sleep under railway bridges when they could not find an empty compartment. He learnt how to beg, steal or collect garbage to earn his daily meal. He also learnt how to kill his nagging conscience to do the same. The easiest way to dodge his conscience was to get intoxicated. He says,

"Drugs helped me forget pain and shame... When intoxicated I could beg or sweep... Do anything, sleep anywhere... I could survive."

The need to remain immune to his surroundings in order to survive, got Jeetu hooked onto alcoholism and drugs. When the city of Jaipur became too much to bear, Jeetu started exploring other towns. He would get into trains and travel as far as they would take him. He learnt of cities, travel routes and languages. Today he is a self proclaimed 'time-table' of Indian railways. He says,

"I know about every train that passes through Jaipur. I know where it is coming from and where it is going... porters and railway personnel consult me when in doubt... this is MY STATION"

Jeetu had experienced living at all kinds of shelter homes. He narrates a life where he would be shepherded from one shelter home to another by the police and yet he would run away from each one of them.

The reason? Jeetu says that children shelter homes are meant to “lock us up and make us do others’ work”. And then he discovered the FXB DCC

Jeetu vows his love for FXB DCC at Jaipur. *He reasons that it was the love shown by FXB staff that pulled him out of a serious case of drug addiction and gave him a glimpse of a better life that he could make for himself.*

He remembers coming back from Delhi after about a month and was stopped by a sweet lady. She coaxed him to join the other children for lunch at the FXB DCC. It was the start of a lasting relationship. The gentle counselling and motherly care got Jeetu hooked on the DCC’s services. Today the centre is his home. After earning about Rs 250 through collecting bottles from the morning trains, Jeetu heads to the centre where he cleans up, puts on a fresh pair of clothes and plays board games with other children. Then they attend classes where he catches up on basic reading skills followed by lunch. He trusts the staff and shares his concerns and receives guidance. He says he has found a new family here – the FXB Family.

Jeetu was nominated by the FXB India Suraksha Staff to be the informer for the Railway Protection Force (RPF). He reports illegal or other disturbing elements inside the perimeters of the railway station to the RPF. He is proud of his new found position and respect and envisions himself as the ‘real’ slumdog millionaire after being inspired by a similarly titled film that he watched at the centre.



What worked in Jeetu's case?

How did the FXB DCC create a family bond with Jeetu? Perhaps it was a recognition of children as self-governing and independent individuals. While common public responses are pity and hostility (Aptekar, 1988) FXB Suraksha's staff inculcated genuine love for them. They **heard** children's views and never failed to **applaud** all that the children had already accomplished for themselves. With wider experience than others of their age and more practical knowledge, the children showed sharper learning curves if properly guided.

FXB DCC identified the major hurdles faced by children in returning to the mainstream. As in Jeetu's case the foremost was the substance abuse faced by him. According to FXB Suraksha's study, approximately 36% of the railway children are addicted to whiteners and other intoxicating solutions. Gentle counselling along with the provision of being engaged in enriching activities worked to stimulate Jeetu mentally and psychologically. His need for addiction was replaced by his eagerness to learn and play. It took time but with patience his young mind quickly understood and adapted to the practical benefits provided at the FXB DCC.

Key Message: FXB India Suraksha's unique 'BUNDLE' APPROACH makes sustainable long term impact because it converges a traditional service based approach with creation of 'FXB family' thus bundling together social, economic & psychological factors.



Once upon a time not so long ago, there lived Najma in a city called Jaipur. Where she came from she did not remember but her eyes were set on dreaming fairytales. "Just like in the movies..." she used to say. "But how?" her friends on the railway platform would ask her. And she could answer with only a laugh. Watching her from across the platforms was a shy boy named Laxman. He would follow the sounds of Najma's laughter around the station with a wish to "... keep her laughter always alive". "But how?" he would ask himself.

FXB Suraksha's staff met Najma (16) and Laxman (17) at the Jaipur Railway Station. As in Jeetu's case, they became a part of the FXB family. Najma recounted stories of young girls being exploited and feared spending nights alone on railway platforms. Upon coaxed to reunite with her family she said,

"I would go home but only if I get love"

Meanwhile Laxman described the vicious circle made by money lenders. On a sum of Rs 100 loaned for five days, the money lenders charge ten times interest on the principal for every extra day. Most of the youth were forever in debt as they were unable to pay back. The likes of Laxman are powerless against such cheating money lenders and unable to stand up for their rights.

Najma and Laxman were introduced to the concept of 'Baal Bank' (Children's Bank) by FXB Suraksha staff. They were advised to deposit 25-50% of their daily wages at the bank. They could monitor their money and maintain their own registers. This gave them confidence over the system and they slowly started saving. As their bank accounts grew Laxman could pay off his debts and Najma could rent a room for herself along with her friends at a nearby slum. But they still continued to maintain regular deposits. Najma explains,

"It is OUR MONEY for our future"

The power of financial security enabled Najma to dream for a future with Laxman - like in the fairytales. While Laxman was inspired to keep up the practise - as it made a life away from the platforms possible and kept Najma's laughter alive.

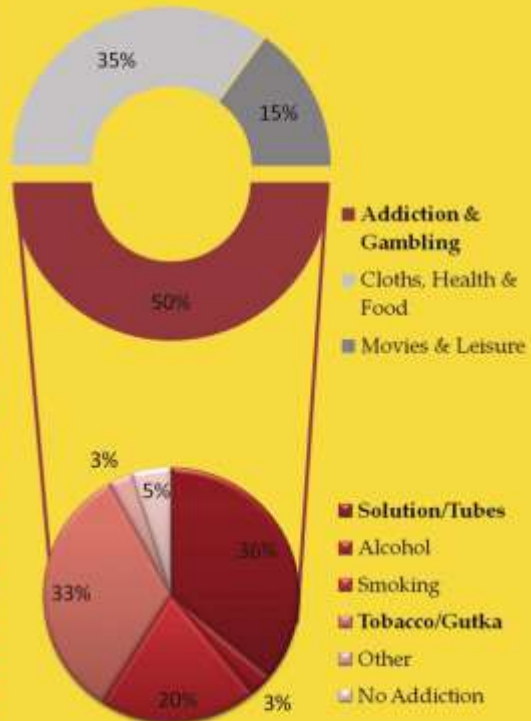
"All that i truly own"

Laxman proudly holds up his 'BAAL BANK' statement file.

CHILDREN
BANK
STATEMENT
FILE (1)2010

Money spending pattern

by railway children before intervention



It is evident from the above pattern that the railway children can save approximately 50% of their money after counselling and substance de-addiction. FXB Suraksha's intervention equips them to make use of the money they save at 'Baal Bank' and invest in a better future.

Stark differences in life at
railway platforms vs life at
FXB DCC



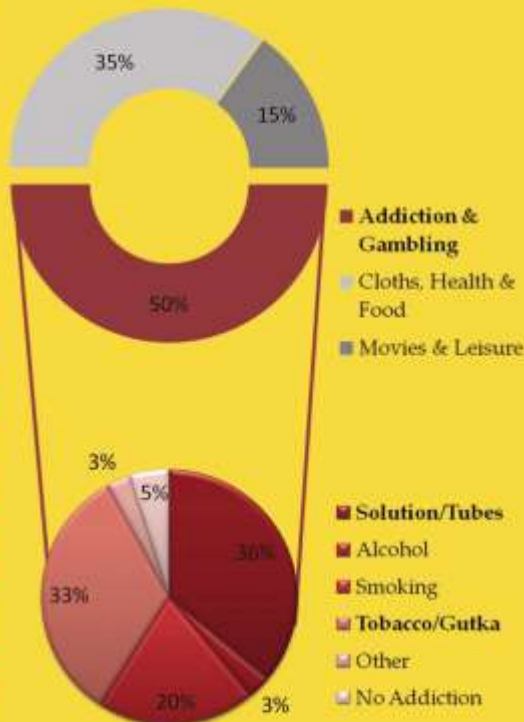
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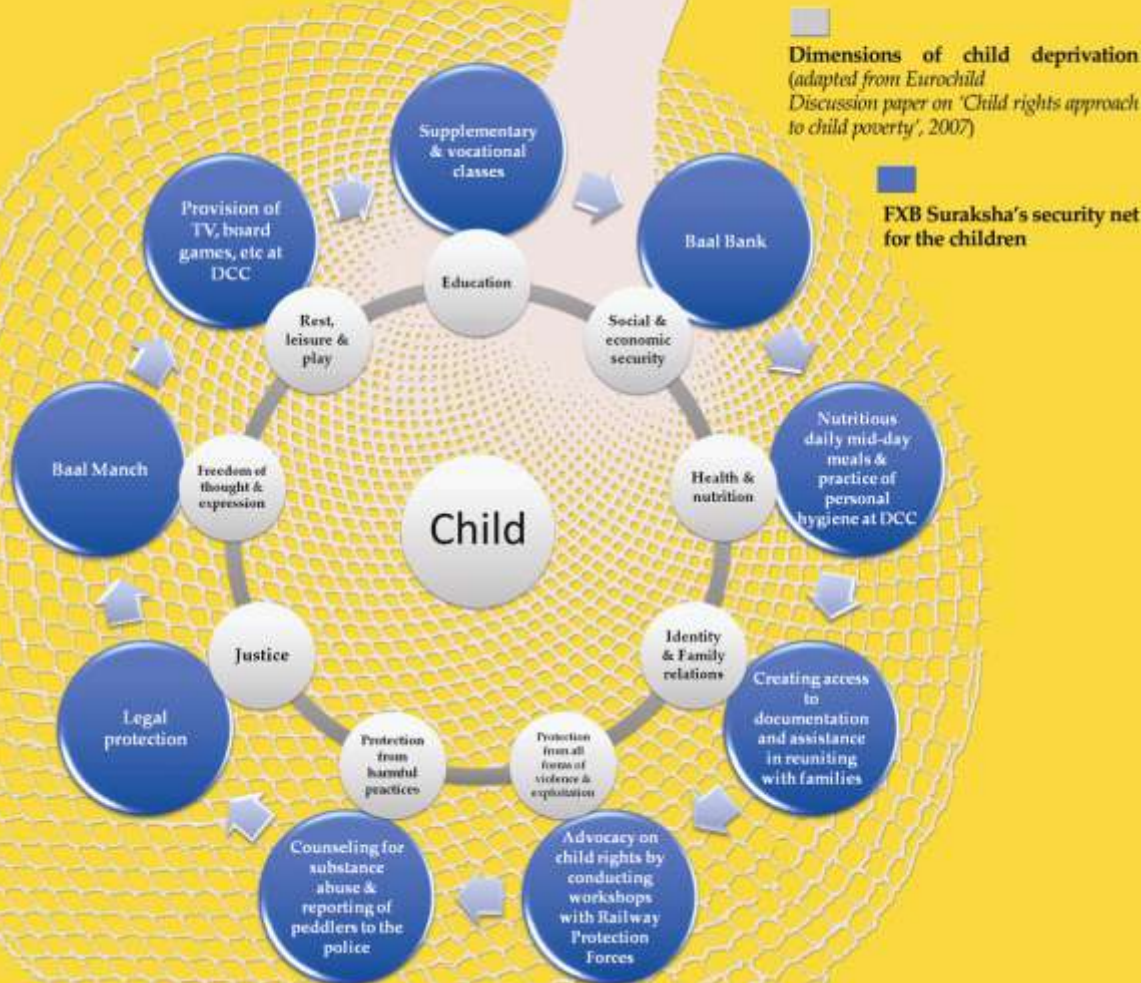
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How FXB Suraksha provides services to counter each aspect of child deprivation for a sustainable long term impact



Dreams & Desires

.. coming true at FXB Day Care Centre

**Could a boy from a slum,
brought up on the railway platforms, who played with garbage bottles,
ever dare to dream of donning a crisp white uniform and working at
one of the most prestigious hospitality groups in the country?**

This question is posed by an eighteen year old Naresh. A boy who till yesterday was an unknown resident of Jyoti Nagar Slums in Jaipur. Today he can roll off a list of celebrities he has met and is a minor celeb in his own neighbourhood.

Naresh was brought up by his mother, Shankara Devi, as his father passed away at an early age. His mother worked as a fruit seller and could earn only enough to feed both of them. Naresh spent a lot of time playing with the railway children at the nearby station when his mother was away at work. Without direction he roamed the streets of Jaipur till he was contacted by FXB Suraksha staff.

Naresh was smart and quickly caught on with the supplementary classes at the FXB DCC. Seeing untapped potential in him, the FXB Suraksha staff contacted Jai Mahal Place, a five-star luxury hotel run by the prestigious Taj group. Naresh was trained in manners, speech and presentation by their housekeeping department. The FXB DCC continued to provide Naresh with supplementary coaching. Once Naresh attained the age of 18, Jai Mahal Palace reviewed his performance and hired him as a bell boy.

Today, Naresh proudly shows his uniform and earns a salary that brings smiles to his mother's face. He says,

"I did not even know how to talk to people... But now I have learnt many life skills and have gained confidence"

Naresh returns to FXB DCC on a regular basis to interact with other children. He plays with them and sets an exemplary role model for them - showing them what they can also make of their lives.





Naresh at his home in Jyoti Nagar slum, Jaipur



Naresh at his job in the Housekeeping Dept. of Jai Mahal Palace, Jaipur

FXB Suraksha has been working with children rather than for them. Their approach of giving prime importance to child participation works wonders at uplifting the children's confidence and giving them ownership over the process of developing a better life for themselves. Like in the case of Naresh, a stimulating environment with the right guidance helped him develop self respect & social competence.

Naresh comes back to FXB DCC and forms a peer/support group which is effective in influencing others to work towards setting goals for themselves. Thus the FXB DCC creates 'capable' children & individuals who exercise the freedom to choose the way they can lead their lives as alert and informed citizens.



just जयपुर
 जिला, 8 नं. 2111
इनको भी चाहिए प्यार
 बच्चों को संभालने के लिए प्यार सबसे बड़ा काम है। जो-जो बच्चे मिले
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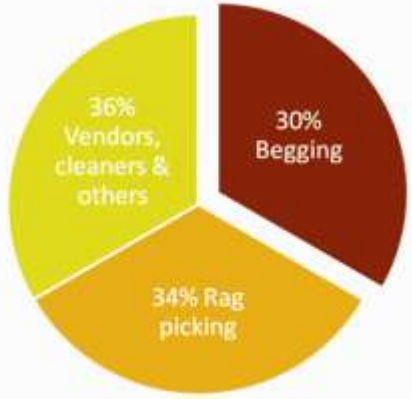


**DEVELOPING RESILIENCE...
 ... INTO CAPABILITIES**

The United Nations Convention on Rights of Child emphasises on children’s rights as citizens and recognizes their capabilities to enact change in their own lives. On the same lines, FXB Suraksha believed in developing the resilience in railway children (demonstrated through their survival in difficult environment) into capabilities.

This change in emphasis from highlighting their ‘needs’ to defending their ‘rights’ (Panter-Brick, 2003) works well in the Indian context as once the children gain knowledge and confidence, they start demanding their share of rights. Thus, FXB Suraksha replaces the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances.

For example, approximately 60% of the railway children are involved in begging or rag picking. FXB Suraksha places them in contact with opportunities for practical learning and thereby curbing such activities.



A leg up for the destitutes in city

...FXB Suraksha - working for rehabilitation of homeless and destitute children... they provide food, shelter and education besides regular counselling...



...FXB Suraksha - working for rehabilitation of homeless and destitute children... they provide food, shelter and education besides regular counselling...

hindustantimes | rajasthan

Workshop on child rights for RFP held

FOR 10 TO 15 DAYS AFTER THE WORKSHOP...
 ...the workshop was held at Jaipur...
 ...the workshop was held at Jaipur...
 ...the workshop was held at Jaipur...

FRIEND OF R.P.F.

Monthly Card

Name: LATA SINGH
 Address: 1/16, Mr. Gaur D'S
D.S. Kulkarni
Scheme, Chakrawala
 Tel. / Mob. No. 9314231496

Date of issue: 1/10/2002 INSPECTOR
 Valid upto: 1/10/2003 for exchange
Jaipur Division - N.W. Railway

ADVOCATING FOR CHILD RIGHTS

FXB Suraksha staff at Jaipur each day holds regular visits to the railway station in search of new children. They believe it is essential to reach out to children as soon as they arrive in the city. The biggest hurdle in this was surprisingly the resistance shown by the Railway Protection Force (RPF). The RPF would catch hold of the children and 'stuff them like cattle in a van' to be sent to shelter homes. This extreme neglect of the rights of the children was a major concern.

The FXB Suraksha staff organized a workshop for the RPF Officers and advocated for the rights of the children. They were informed of the Juvenile Justice Act and Child welfare committee - laws that already existed in India but were not being implemented. These proactive steps were rewarded by a 'RPF Mitra' (Friend of RPF) card that authorized FXB Suraksha staff's presence on the railway station. A recognition that no other NGO holds in Jaipur.



About the organization:

FXB India Suraksha

Investing in Children, Empowering Families, Strengthening Communities

FXB India Suraksha works for the rights of children affected by poverty and disease, especially those affected or infected by HIV/AIDS. FXB Suraksha currently operates an integrated DCC near the Jaipur Railway Station where children are offered a safe place to wash, eat, and sleep and receive other social services. In 2009 it reached out to over 190 children in the age group 5 to 16 years.

The FXB DCC provides formal education where possible, as well as tutoring, life-skills education, recreational extracurricular activities and field trips, and vocational training. Counselling is held to promote well-being, including HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, substance de-addiction and safe hygiene and sanitation practices. Referrals to permanent shelters, foster families, or adoption services, as well as assistance to reunite with families is provided as appropriate. In addition to these services, the FXB DCC in Jaipur has started a Baal Manch (children expression group) for Railway Children that meets every month, which is an opportunity for children to voice their needs and problems. Along with one of its partners, FXB Suraksha has initiated a Baal Bank (children's bank) run by children themselves. It has today more than 200 bank accounts of child labourer and collection of more than 0.2 million. Children save money on daily basis, take loan when they wish to buy themselves clothes, ticket to travel to their native place.

A core committee for the protection and care of railway children has been constituted through FXB Suraksha's advocacy initiatives. It comprises of Railway Protection Force (RPF), Station Master and other Railway Officials. The railway officials were educated about child rights and training on right behaviour towards children. Workshops were conducted to make them aware of JJ Act and CWC. The issuing of 'RPF MITRA' cards to staff of FXB Jaipur has been a major step towards the goal of child safety.

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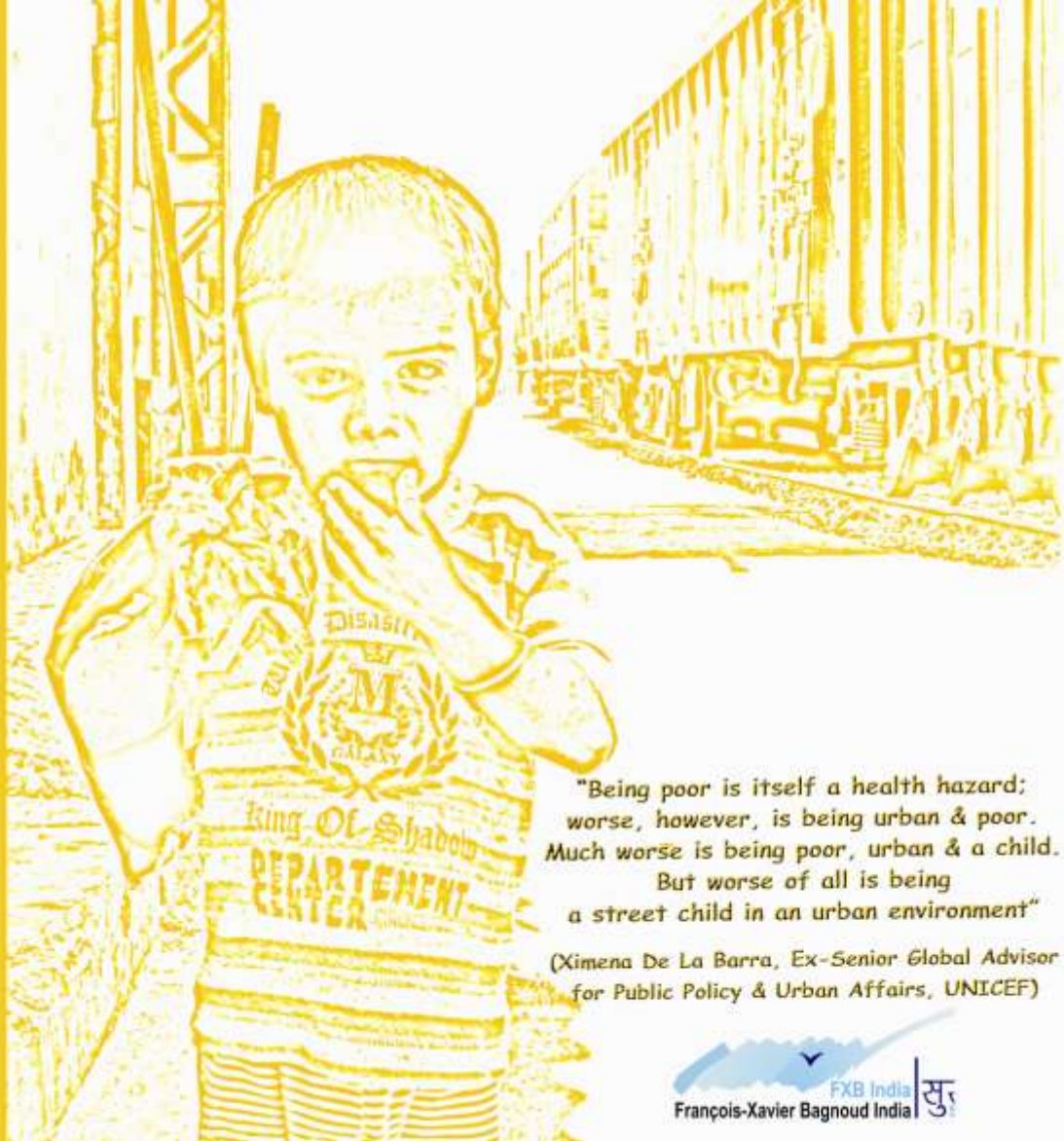
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*"Being poor is itself a health hazard;
worse, however, is being urban & poor.
Much worse is being poor, urban & a child.
But worse of all is being
a street child in an urban environment"*

*(Ximena De La Barra, Ex-Senior Global Advisor
for Public Policy & Urban Affairs, UNICEF)*