Supporting Street Children on Kolkata’s Stations
Year 2 Project Report

Project partners

Funded by
In July 2017, the second year of the three year ‘Supporting Street Children on Kolkata’s Stations’ project resumed in and around three of India’s busiest railway stations: Sealdah, Howrah and Dum Dum in Kolkata, West Bengal.

This followed a successful first year of the programme, which commenced in February 2015. The CLSA Chairman’s Trust approved funding of $56,973 USD for the second and third years of the programme.

Project objective
“Build the street work capacity of StreetInvest’s partner organisations in Kolkata, Children in Need Institute (CINI) and Little Big Help (LBH).”

StreetInvest has delivered training, mentoring and monitoring and evaluation work on this project and CINI and Little Big Help have delivered the remainder of the programme.

Overarching impact
The project should result in:
- Regular street worker presence, providing street children with access to a trustworthy adult, which will help to reduce the stigma and discrimination that street-connected children face within their communities, and to promote the positive growth and development of every street-connected child.
- The project is aiming to reach a minimum of 2,000 street-connected children.

Building on the successes of year one
The second year of activity continued to work towards these overarching goals, taking learnings from the first year to enhance the two partners’ programmes, specifically:

Areas of operation:
Both partners expanded their area of operation beyond the station platforms. CINI extended its area to include the Khaldhar (also known as the Canal Side Road). LBH identified three slums areas surrounding Howrah and Dum Dum and adapted their operating model accordingly.

Street children as street workers:
CINI and LBH trained Change Agents, street connected-children (between 18-25) who expressed interest in becoming street workers. CINI also worked with self-identified younger teenagers to provide peer support and advocacy through the Street Champions programme.

Community advocacy:
Following the success of community engagement in the first year, greater focus was given to community advocacy in years two and three.

Both organisations fostered stronger connections with a wide range of community groups to challenge negative perceptions and to explore how the community can support the children in a positive way.

Network development:
Building on the knowledge and experience developed within the two organisations in the first year, CINI and LBH reached out to other organisations in Kolkata to share their learnings and to advocate for a street work approach across all organisations.
Supporting Street Children on Kolkata’s Stations
A Snapshot

Street-connected children reached

- 147 street-connected young people engaged as street champions and change agents
- 1,606 children received direct support
- 1,350+ children have access to a trustworthy adult street worker
- Potential to influence the lives of 21,907 children through advocacy

“I have spoken after a long time. I had stopped talking to other (people) years back. After meeting (a street worker) I love being here.”
Street girl, aged 8

Stakeholders actively engaged

- 23 street workers are active as part of the project
- 54 individuals received street work training
- 20 organisations engaged in two cross sector network meetings to protect street-connected children’s rights in Kolkata
- 5,860 participants attended community advocacy workshops

“One can make a difference but a united voice can bring the change.”
Network meeting participant
The impact of street work

Effective street work has three distinct yet interrelated outcomes: street-connected children are safer, better supported and have a stronger sense of belonging within their communities.

Street work, whether on an individual, group or community level, will often promote more than one of these outcomes for street-connected children.

The overall impact for street-connected children is that they are enabled to grow and develop in the most positive way and experience a decrease in stigma and discrimination.

How has the ‘Supporting Street Children on Kolkata’s Stations’ project supported street-connected children?

Safer in the street environment
• First aid and emergency health care was accessed by children 77 times

• 23 street workers visited the streets 1,403 times, making 1,769 children safer in their environment.

Enhanced sense of belonging within the community
• 859 street-connected children have taken part in 18 public celebrations in the project period

• 485 counselling sessions were held across both organisations

• 755 group work sessions were held in total including creative play, sports and youth club activities

Supported to access vital services and resources
• 895 street corner education sessions were held

• 1,636 meals were given to children through the organisations’ food programmes.
Working with groups

Group work is a vital part of street work, as it strengthens bonds between peers and enhances children's sense of belonging to a group in a positive way. It can increase trust and communication between street workers and children. Group activities can also encourage children to follow their own interests and develop self esteem.

Examples of the group work at CINI and LBH include sports, dance therapy, focus group discussions and creative play sessions.

Focus group discussions
A total of 160 focus groups have been held, with 870 participants (394 male, 476 female) across both organisations in year two of the project. The focus groups are vital forums of communication with the children.

Reaching children through sports
Group sports can be a great way to reach out to children to start building a sense of trust and to engage them with the street teams. As well as these emotional benefits, it benefits children's mental and physical health.

Indoor and outdoor sports activities have been carried out throughout the year by CINI, and as part of celebratory days, notably on the International Day for Street Children, during which children played football, cricket and participated in other physical activities.

Dance therapy
CINI also run group dance therapy sessions, which help young people become more in tune and comfortable with their bodies. This is particularly valuable and healing for young people who have experienced physical or sexual trauma.

These expressive arts sessions have the unique capacity to engage large numbers of adolescents and are effective in helping young people understand their bodies in a positive way. The street workers also use the sessions to educate participants about their sexual and reproductive rights.

160 focus groups held, with 870 participants
Making a difference in a child's life

This case study is of a 10 year old girl, who had been living in severe poverty on the streets.

Little Big Help's street workers have been working with her over the last year.

Tough beginnings

This little girl was born into extreme poverty and lives on the streets with her mum and three siblings. Her father passed away recently, but when he was alive she was often badly beaten by her father, who was an alcoholic.

She has no shelter at all, which means she has to conduct private activities like changing and defecating on the open street. She told us that her body has been touched in unwanted ways while sleeping on the road at night. She has had to beg for food and money and her appearance was very unkempt. Sometimes she has experienced sympathy from others, but she is verbally abused and neglected on a daily basis.

When we met her she was without hope and felt she needed a ‘miracle’.

Building trust

Little Big Help started working with her but the early days were not very smooth. Initially she was not ready to accept our street workers, as her earlier experiences taught her that adults were abusive.

Our team members see her regularly and have been talking to her about her life, her dreams and the importance of an education.

Our team members conducted several visit to her family and had discussions with her mother, to see if she would be happy to send her daughter to our centre.

A turning point in the relationship with her was when her leg was injured and we gave her first aid. She felt a caring physical touch that day.

We told her about the food programme at our centre and she started coming along. Gradually some changes started taking place.

Looking to the future

She is now enrolled in a government school and is doing well in her studies. Together we have also uncovered some hidden talents: she is a good dancer and has performed in our Street Cultural Programme. We have noticed that she is very intelligent and we are teaching her about her rights.

We have also taught her to look after her own safety – for example, to always travel the streets in a group, to reduce the risk of abuse.

She tells us she wants to be a teacher in future and she seems focussed on making her dream come true.

The child pictured is not the girl described in this case study, to protect her anonymity.
Engaging the community

Community advocacy was core to the CLSA programme. Both CINI and Little Big Help engaged key community groups to challenge negative perceptions which can lead to stigma and discrimination against street-connected children.

They also sought to build stronger connections between the children and community. Support from community groups can lead to children’s positive growth and development through the provision of services such as healthcare and safe spaces for recreation and learning.

Engaging the police

One outcome of the police engagement was the creation of a child friendly corner in one of Kolkata’s police stations, so that street-connected children who are reported lost, do not feel the additional stress and threat which can be caused by being kept alongside adult detainees.

Mothers on the Sealdah platform

“A lot of mothers come to the platform as residents of the station. It is our duty to make the mothers aware about the risks that children face of the station.” Street worker: CINI

Through engaging these mothers regularly, the street workers have in effect put 69 more trustworthy adults into the lives of the street-connected children. They are “active and are acting as watchdogs on the station.”

Several of these mothers have received rights-based and child-centred training. Workshops have covered topics including: legal identity, sexual behaviour and the risk of trafficking.

City wide celebrations

As well as these local community engagements, CINI and LBH routinely hold public celebrations with the children and local community members. This enhances the children’s sense of belonging by involving them in the celebrations while sending a clear message to the public and authorities that street-connected children have a role to play in public life.

At least 859 street-connected children have taken part in 18 public celebrations in the project period

136 workshops held, engaging 5,860 participants
A core part of the project was equipping more street workers and street work trainers with the skills to make an even bigger difference to street-connected children’s lives.

A new training module, One-to-One Engagement Strategies, was delivered in November ‘17, to equip street workers who had already undergone StreetInvest’s core training.

The training was delivered to street workers who were already skilled, to teach them additional techniques to enhance their ability to engage with children individually. The module explored strategies to build stronger relationships of trust with street-connected children, problem solving techniques and how these relationships can be measured, through monitoring and evaluation.

100% of participants who had taken part in the training said that they agreed with these key statements:

“I feel confident I can use some solution focused techniques in my work with street children.”

“I am confident in my ability to build trustworthy relationships with individual street children.”

A cascade model

As well as the One-to-One training, 12 street workers from CINI and LBH received the Training of Trainers module. These individuals are now equipped to pass on their new knowledge to other street workers.

Following this, 40 individuals have been trained in street work courses across CINI and Little Big Help.

Street-connected young people as street workers and peer advocates

CINI and LBH are both running Change Agent and Street Champion programmes, which are designed to engage street-connected young people who are interested in supporting their peers through street work, or acting as advocates in the community.

Street Champions are on average between 12 – 15 years old and act as children’s representatives in the community. Change Agents are 18+ previously street-connected young people, who work as paid street workers.

There are now an incredible 147 Street Champions and Change Agents across both organisations. All these young people have received training: the Change Agents have received street work training and work alongside the core teams and the Street Champions received training in public speaking, rights sensitisation workshops and street work methods.

The programme directly benefits the participants, as it equips them with new skills and gives them confidence. It also enables a truly participatory approach to community advocacy, as the Street Champions can represent their views in meetings. CINI alone have run 75 session with the Street Champions, between July 2017 and June 2018.

54 street workers received training between July ‘17 – June ‘18
Being a Change Agent

Durga Roy is on the Change Agent programme at CINI. She had strong connections to the street in her childhood and was supported by CINI. This is her story.

“My journey from being a street connected child to becoming a Change Agent and working for the rights of other street-connected children has not been a piece of cake.

I had strong connections to the street as a child. I was subjected to torture by an alcoholic father, which only strengthened my connection. With each day, I started spending more time at the station. While my mother sold food to passers by near the parking area, I used to slip out to play with my friends.

I remember how difficult it was to survive under a plastic shed during monsoons. Sometimes we would sleep inside the station to protect ourselves from rain, only to get beaten by the police.

I met a street worker from CINI who saw me begging and visited me regularly. After such a long time, I had found someone who was interested in me and wanted to know what I liked and had to say.

The time spent with her was memorable. She told me to access CINI’s Safe Space during the day and stay at the girl’s shelter home at night. But in the beginning, I was quite apprehensive. I didn’t know whether to trust her. Her consistent visits helped me overcome that.

With the little money that I earned through begging, I bought meals and spent the extra to stay at CINI’s night shelter for girls. The door leading to a better life was right in front of me. With my consent, I was enrolled in a shelter home. But one thing that didn’t change was the involvement of the street workers at CINI. They encouraged me to come to them regularly, which I did.

I still remember my first day as a street worker. It will always be etched in my heart.

When I saw the children being deprived of their rights, it brought back memories from my past. Dancing was a passion of mine as a child and I recalled how I was once forbidden from participating in a dance competition because I was a street child.

Now after receiving street work training, I’m actively motivating the children to speak up for their lost rights. It always gives me pleasure when children come up to me when I go to the street. They call me “Didi” which means elder sister. I am one of their closest ones.

The children’s knowledge always astonishes me. During my street work, children have helped me to reveal unnoticed places in the station. They love to share their daily experiences with me. It makes me feel proud that I have become a trustworthy adult in their lives.

Once I met two new children and they didn’t interact with me. I gave them my time and met with them regularly. About a month later I invited them to join some activities and they said ‘yes’! Their participation delighted me and I am sure no other thing can give that much happiness.

People in the community appreciate my efforts. They trust me and share their problems with me. My hard work and dedication has paid off.

I wish to devote my entire life working for the children living in street situations and to help them dream big.”
In April, the second Network meeting was held the day after the International Day for Street children, on the 13th April. This was a much larger meeting, with 90 attendees representing 20 civil society bodies and NGOs, including Save the Children.

The main objective of this meeting was to align the organisations who had expressed an interest in the network in November and to engage beyond the NGO sector, to ensure a cross-sector approach.

“This Consultation is bringing together State, local NGOs and international NGOs under the same forum to ensure that all the duty bearers have the same understanding of the current situation of the street connected children thereby developing strategies jointly for sustainability.” - Dr Samir Narayan Chaudhuri, Director of CINI

Not only was it attended by NGOs and government officials, five street-connected young people also attended.

These young people are on the Street Champion programme and represented the views of 60 of their peers, who had been consulted through focus group discussions the day before.

One of the project’s objectives was to start building a cross sector network of organisations, to uphold the rights of street-connected children in Kolkata.

Working together, organisations can create collaborative work plans, share resources and make more of an impact when engaging local authorities and government.

Two network meetings were held in Kolkata during the project. Nine organisations attended the first meeting, led by CINI, which explored the organisations’ approaches to working with street-connected children. The meeting concluded that while all the organisations took a child rights approach, this was not all the organisations interpreted this in the same way.

At the end of this first meeting, the consensus was the cooperation between organisations would be beneficial for the young people these organisations support.

“Our roads are filled with garbage. Nobody cleans it. We are unable to use the toilets as they charge us money every time we use it. Most of the men in our community consume alcohol and abuse us.

In the last few months, many accidents have taken place on the road as there are no speed breakers. We are not receiving food grains every month despite having our ration cards. In schools, we do not get proper mid day meal. We have tried to talk to the Councillor but he has not taken any steps.”

Child 1, Canal West Road, speaking at the 13th April Consultation

“Network Building

The time has come to revive these unheard voices and support them in retrieving their long lost rights.”

WBCPCR Chairperson
Ms. Ananya Chakraborty, speaking at the 13th April consultation
### How did we do? Progress against targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PROGRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual and Group work</td>
<td>Ongoing Street Work</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Daily street work conducted by two dedicated street work teams at both organisations, with approx. 10 street workers in each team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>Street Child Focus Group Discussions</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Up to four Focus Groups with approx. 11 street children per organisation, per month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community work</td>
<td>Community Advocacy Workshops</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: 8 session per year with approximately 15 participants each.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Activity | Description | Progress |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informing</td>
<td>Street Child Data</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Disseminate headcount and service mapping statistics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Complete. Will be ongoing</strong>&lt;br&gt;Both organisations submitted monitoring data in accordance with StreetInvest's framework. This will be ongoing into the third year of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing</td>
<td>Network building</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: To develop a citywide network of organisations conducting street work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Organisational Staff Training</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Develop 80 street workers in further effective street work skills, knowledge, values and attitudes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact Training</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Train 8 street workers in impact measurement and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Street Champions and Change Agents</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Train 40 street-connected children in street work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
<td><strong>Aim</strong>: Train 8 street workers to deliver street work training.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OUR VISION IS SIMPLE:

ETNA Community Centre
13 Rosslyn Road,
Twickenham,
TW1 2AR
United Kingdom

www.streetinvest.org
info@streetinvest.org
020 8892 9025
@streetinvest

Thank You

www.streetinvest.org
info@streetinvest.org
020 8892 9025
@streetinvest

Project partners

Funded by

CLSA