

MASTI KI PATHSHALA

ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR

JAMSHEDPUR, JHARKHAND





As is the case with most cities in India children living in informal settlements alongside roads and railway lines are often found engaged in activities like rag picking, slag picking and begging. Jamsheerpur, Jharkhand is no exception to this unfortunate reality. Not only these children are under-nourished, they are also more prone to be exposed/ addicted to psychotropic drugs. Quite often, they also fall prey to plans of organized criminal gangs who use them as foot soldiers to commit petty crimes. Due to dire circumstances these children are compelled to grow up in, these children are perpetually confronted with unmet basic needs. These deficits are a primary trigger to their initiation in the world of crime jeopardizing their safety, security and health. Left unattended, such children are prone to wander towards activities that the society can do without. However, given a positive direction in life through empathy and education, these children are no less than others and stand a very good chance to avoid the otherwise destined criminal trajectory, and become responsible citizens who can contribute positively to achievement of societal goals.

Masti Ki Pathshala is a unique initiative to salvage these innocent lives by initiating them into the world of education and learning. The objective of Masti Ki Pathshala, a residential educational bridging facility, is to bring these children into its fold and gradually ease them into the formal educational process involving not only subject knowledge but also sports, arts and music.

CONCEPT DESIGN AND PROCESSES

To enroll students into the Programme, a team of officials from Masti ki Pathshala regularly conducts surveys of places with high incidence of child labour to persuade the children to join Masti Ki Pathshala while keeping their families in the loop.

Residential Special Training Centre (RSTC) forms the backbone of Masti Ki Pathshala initiative. Children between age of 9-14 years of age are eligible to join an RSTC under the Masti Ki Pathshala initiative. Currently there are four RSTCs with 297 students. Three of these centres are for boys while one is for girls. Once a candidate is enrolled in the Masti ki Pathshala s/he is shifted to an RSTC where s/he spends 18-24 months to bridge learning gaps, before being mainstreamed into an age appropriate class standard in a regular urban school.

The RSTCs provide a safe, respectful and enjoyable learning environment for children who enroll into the Programme by providing

a set-up that ensures proper nutrition, health and hygiene. Alongside is a systematic plan to not only bridge their learning gaps but also provide opportunities to bring out their creative abilities in areas like music, dance and sports.

The three schools with which Masti ki Pathshala Programme has collaborated for onward mainstreaming of these children are top ranking English medium high schools of Jamsheerpur. These are: Kashi Nath High School, Tanpore High School (Agrico) and JUSCO High School (Kadma). The Principals/ teachers of partner schools also have shown great enthusiasm in accepting children from RSTC and integrating them into their regular classes. Masti ki Pathshala and these schools have jointly determined to do what it takes to make these boys succeed academically.

OUTCOMES AND WAY FORWARD

A total of 37 children who have been mainstreamed under the project have performed very well and have already been promoted to the next class. Masti Ki Pathshala has exploded the myth that street children "are no good". The remarkable performance of these children in every aspect, be it academics, music, drama, choreography, sports, arts and craft, has convinced all those who have interacted with them that these children have potential like all others. All they need is opportunity and support.

Masti Ki Pathshala is breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and exploitation that traps children from less fortunate family backgrounds. Subsequent to their enrollment in the Masti Ki Pathshala Programme, their home environment is also changing for the better. As their families get that feeling of hope and pride, they are making efforts of their own to enhance their own lifestyles and tend to be better groomed and well spoken with feeling of positivity radiating through the family, neighbourhood and community. Children who enroll in Masti ki pathshala often become role models for other kids in similar vulnerable situations and encourage them to also look for options that change their lives. By making underprivileged children and their parents realise the value of education, Masti ki Pathshala is beginning to alter mindsets that prioritize work over education for a child at the cost of the potential these children have for contributing towards fulfillment of societal and national goals.



OBJECTIVES

- EMPOWERING CHILDREN FROM EXTREMELY DISADVANTAGED SOCIO-ECONOMIC SETTINGS AND MAKING THEM RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS WHO WILL CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO SOCIETY.
- PREPARING STREET CHILDREN FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE BY INTEGRATING THEM INTO FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM TO ENABLE THEM TO ENTER PRODUCTIVE OCCUPATIONS.
- INSTILLING IN THEM VALUES AND ETHICS DESIRABLE FOR A PLURALISTIC AND DIVERSE SOCIETY, IN THE PROCESS POSITIVELY IMPACTING THE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES THEY COME FROM.