

Urban Street Children Programme

Create a provision for safe childhood for the most underprivileged children who are born/grow up on the streets and inspire these children to aim for an empowered future.



Rubina taking advantage of the locker facilities at Mirpur main centre



Children at the Darus Salam sub-centre displaying records of their savings

Background

There is an estimated 250,000 street dwelling children in Dhaka, many of whom are lost, abandoned, separated from their families or have run away from home. Urban street children are deprived of education, safe sanitation and water, healthcare services and safe shelter. They are forced to spend their nights on the roads, at rail stations, bus stands, parks, construction sites, and religious places (like mosques and shrines), in Dhaka. They engage in various income-earning activities in the informal sector characterised by low wages, risk and insecurity. Many of them are subject to violence/abuse from their families and communities.

A large percentage of these children become victims of sexual abuse and drugs at a very young age. As a result, they are among the 'very high risk' population in the country.

There have been some initiatives by a number of development organisations that have focused on health, education and livelihood development of urban street children. However, limited lifespan and very limited coverage of these initiatives have meant that the impact was negligible. There is a need for larger, sustainable initiatives to create a meaningful and positive future for the most vulnerable children of the city.

BRAC's pilot programme for urban street children aims to create a path for such larger initiatives. It was initiated in May 2013 for a four year period and will cover 3,600 children by 2016.

Objectives

- Building hope and confidence in the most disadvantaged children by equipping them with primary education and life skill knowledge.
- Creating safe employment for the children at risk through apprenticeships, vocational training and job replacement.

Target group

The target group of this programme is street children aged 6 to 15 years. This includes:

- Full-time/part-time working children with high-risk jobs such as beggars, tokai (scrap material collectors), flower vendors (who face risks from traffic, since they sell their goods on the roads), day labourers, helpers on buses/ Legunas, etc.
- Street children without parents, but who are too young to work and need a safe home
- School-going street children with working parents who need tutorial support and a safe space to go to after school

Programme operations at a glance

17 BRAC Children Centres (2 main centres and 15 sub-centres) in Mirpur and Banglabazar areas of Dhaka
1700 street children are enrolled currently
493 placed in safer jobs
12 children received/receiving vocational training
1039 children using savings facilities
4753 occasions where healthcare was provided

Key Activities

In order to bring sustainable changes in the lives of these children, BRAC is creating opportunities to engage them in comprehensive development activities.

- 24 hour safe home for children (6-10 years) without parents
- Non-formal primary education and tutorial support
- Life skill development education
- Employment creation (job placement, linkages with vocational training and small enterprise within centres)
- Health support
- Savings facilities
- Engagement with local community through local community development committees (LCDC)
- Parents and children counselling
- Day time shelter with bathing and resting facilities

- Provision of a nutritious meal at main centres
- Locker facilities at main centres
- Extracurricular activities and entertainment

Research and Evaluation

BRAC Research and Evaluation Division (RED) is involved in assessing the effectiveness of the programme for its participants. For this purpose, a study has been initiated named Lives of Children in Street and BRAC Children Centre. The final report will be published by October 2015.