

**Collective action for Children
RPF in collaboration with Railway Children
Partners in India**



**An update by Railway Children
Submitted to the RPF**

June 2009 – November 2009

**RAILWAY
children**

THE VOICE FOR STREET CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

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Background

Railway Children India works primarily with street children who are at risk at and around the transport terminals. It works in partnership with local organizations focused on transport terminals. Since 1996, Railway Children has grown from reaching out to about 200 children annually to over 17,000 children each year. Railway Children is currently in partnership with 15 voluntary organizations, and has a presence in more than 40 locations in 8 states and one union territory of India, where the lives of thousands of children are being impacted. Through its dynamic and participatory approach, Railway Children provides funds, specialised support, training and capacity building and works towards raising awareness among people in different sections of society on the issues affecting street children. It collaborates with government departments, recognizing that lasting solutions lie in the hands of both the government and people. Railway Children's emphasis is to prevent children from moving on to street from the transport terminus, wherein large number of runaway and abandoned children land first after moving out of their home.

Railway Children has a firm belief that bringing a sustainable change in lives of children who are at risk is only possible through systemic interventions. Through its systematic interventions and achievements through partnership programmes it recognizes the critical role Railway Protection Force (RPF) play in the lives of vulnerable children at platforms – What is and what can be!

Railway Protection Force (RPF) needs to be appreciated for bringing a special focus in their mission statement on being vigilant to prevent trafficking in women and children and take appropriate action to rehabilitate destitute children found in Railway area. Keeping the mission statement and the objectives of RPF in mind, the role of RPF as a statutory body becomes more crucial.

This approach is clearly reflected in the sensitive and dynamic leadership in RPF. **Mr. Ranjit Sinha, DGP RPF** during a key meeting (July 22, 2009) with departmental officials and Railway Children team said that, *"it is the moral responsibility of the RPF to ensure a child friendly environment for the women and children at the station premises and as a part of the society, the RPF is bound by moral duty."*

Objective of this report

Railway Children has made an endeavor to capture the impact of RPF's collaboration with civil society organizations across India in regards to lives of children who were at platforms. The same is part of our effort to keep updating and sharing the collective actions between RPF and Railway Children's partners based in various regions. In our previous publication titled, **WHAT IS and WHAT CAN BE – Multi-stakeholder cooperation at railway stations in India for interventions with children in need of care and protection, 2009**, we have shared about the role of statutory bodies and their good practices across the country for interventions with children in need of care and protection.

The present effort is in continuation of the same. The objective of this report is to communicate how small yet meaningful efforts from the RPF across the country are making a major difference to hundreds of children in the country. As **Mr. Devendranath Kasar** (Senior Commandant, Mumbai Central) said in a meeting on 24 March 2010 to our Country Head, *"Through the training, the police are taught to be more human as they have become hardened over the years. It is refreshing for them to have some rest and a new perspective on children. Although the police have so many duties and are overworked we are focused on 'better' police force than more police force (referring to the quality rather than the numbers of designated police)."*

While compiling this information, we recognise that there could be more instances of meaningful contributions on part of RPF for the said children, which we are not aware of. We have found through our experiences that there are individual RPF personnel, who are quite sensitive and willing to support the children and their support has really made a strong positive impact to the lives of many children.

Areas of collective action of RPF with Railway Children partners

Three broad areas of collective action highlighting RPF's role have been outlined below:

- (A) RPF's role of referral in children's rehabilitation across India
- (B) RPF's active participation and support to Railway Children partners in India
- (C) Multifaceted and noteworthy contributions of RPF

(A) RPF's role of referral in children's rehabilitation across India

Railway Children partners are closely working with local RPF team at various locations. The following table shows the numbers of children proactively referred by RPF to the organizations working on these locations. Their actions have really paved the way for placing these children in a safer and protective environment.

Locations	Railway Children 's Partner Organization	Number of children referred by RPF to Partner Organisation
Mumbai –MCT, Bandra & Dadar (Maharashtra)	Saathi	2
Mumbai, LTT (Maharashtra)	Balprafulta	8
Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)	Ehsaas	15
Mugalsarai (Uttar Pradesh)	Saathi	6
Patna (Bihar)	Bal Sakha	1
Kolkata (West Bengal)	CINI Asha	
Malda (West Bengal)	Praajak	1
New Jalpaiguri (West Bengal)	Concern	42
Katihar (West Bengal)	Concern	5
Kishanganj (West Bengal)	Concern	6
East (West Bengal)	Don Bosco Anbu Illam	10
Kota (Rajasthan)	Khilti Kaliyan	1
Madurai (Tamilnadu)	Nanban Trust	12
Itarsi Madhya Pradesh)	Jeevodaya	2
Secunderabad (Andhra Pradesh)	Sathi	6
TOTAL		117

(B) RPF's active participation and support to Railway Children partners in India

Regular interactions as well as participation in meetings for decision making pertaining to rehabilitation of children are visible features of effective coordination.

The following table indicates the active and growing participation of RPF in key meetings at certain locations. At some places, it is restricted to individual level involvement. The involvement can also be related to promptness of referrals of runaway children to partner organizations.

Location	Railway Children	Number of meetings	Attendance (number of RPF
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	Partner Organisation	conducted for the RPF within the Specified period	personnel who has attended the meetings)
Patna	Balsakha	18	4
Danapur	Balsakha	2	6
Mumbai	Balprafulta	1	15
Malda	Prajaak	2	2
Asansol	Praajak	2	2
Jalpaiguri	Concern	5	12
Lucknow	Ehsaas	3	32
Mughalsarai	Sathi	12	24
Mumbai	Saathi	24	48
Kota	Khilti Kaliyan	1	4
Secunderabad	Sathi	5	24
Itarsi	Jeevodaya	1	14
Madurai	Nanban	One to one meetings	Participation
Chennai	DBA	One to one meetings	Participation
	TOTAL	76	187

(C) Multifaceted and noteworthy contributions of RPF

These collaborations are resulting in a wide range of actions and initiatives co creating change in the lives of individual children to groups of children. Taking their initiative at a deeper level to understand the challenges, problems, issues and special needs of the children, RPF has intensively participated in training programs organized by the Railway Children partners. There are locations and zones where RPF is proactively taking the lead and ensuring that their officials go through sensitization programs on children issues.

There are number of initiatives started by RPF itself as well as initiatives through partners at various locations and they are supporting the same. The relationship built in the past at several locations has started bearing positive influence on the lives of children in need of care & protection. Post our compilation of good practices in the publication titled, **What is and What can be**, the present update of RPF in collaboration with civil society organizations (Railway Children partners) can be reflected in these noteworthy and multifaceted initiatives and developments.

Resolution on Child friendly railway station

- The Special Railway Task Force, Northern railways has formally announced that by **2011 Lucknow station** would be made **India's first Child friendly station**. In this effort along with other stakeholders, RPF is supporting in an appreciable manner. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)

Support in making a child labour free zone

- Sustained advocacy and collective action with different stakeholders including RPF, CINI ASHA has been able to make **platform nos. 11,12,13,14 (in south section Sealdah) as child labor free zone**. This has resulted in less children coming to these platforms in search of livelihood. CINI ASHA team along with members of RPF & GRP regularly take rounds of the station and ensure that children are not employed with vendors (Source: CINI ASHA. Sealdah, Kolkata)

Participation in trainings on Juvenile Justice (Care and protection) Act, amendment 2006

Training on Juvenile Justice Act for the RPF helps to ensure that:

- Children in need of care and protection are protected, supported and empowered to make the best of their difficult circumstances;
- Children in conflict with the law are treated fairly, given the opportunity and guidance to take responsibility for their mistakes, and given a second chance to avoid such mistakes in future so they can develop into responsible adults.

However the positive impact of police training is not limited to the child alone: society also benefits from a culture where human rights, justice and compassion are valued and where its most vulnerable citizens are protected.

- **Regular trainings with the RPF personnel** were conducted on every 1st & 3rd Saturdays of the month. During the period, 9 trainings were conducted with an average of **15 participants in each training**. (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- After a long wait, the institutionalization of RPF trainings has happened to an extent by the **inclusion of the Juvenile Justice Act in the RPF Training Manual** until the Sub Inspector level. (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- A total Of **289 RPF personnel attended the training program organized by the CINI ASHA** team on issues of child rights violation & abuse. (Source: CINI ASHA, Kolkata)
- **84 RPF (13 new & 71 serving) personnel** have been sensitized on issues related to child protection. (Source: CINI ASHA, Kolkata)
- On request from RPF, CINI ASHA has started holding **awareness programs on children issues at the RPF training centre** based in Kanchapara. (Source: CINI ASHA, Kolkata).
- **RPF have invited Ehsaas in their state level meetings** to share about the Railway children surveillance and protection mechanism and Juvenile Justice Act. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)
- **Ehsaas organized orientation programs for all the staff of RPF** stationed at the Lucknow station. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)

Quick redressal of children's issues

- **RPF staff** from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus, Mumbai **has referred 5 cases** of children to Balprafulta and also seek speedy help in cases where they require any information about existing children. (Source: Balprafulta, Mumbai)
- **20 children have been directly contacted & restored with families/ referred to the children's home by the RPF** in the last 6 months (May 09- Nov 09) and 1 child was referred to Saathi (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- During the period, Saathi contacted 211 children at the Mughalsarai junction. Out of this, 106 children have been reunited with their families. The **RPF team helps in tracing the families of the children**, whose residence falls in their jurisdiction areas. (Source: Saathi, Mughalsarai)
- Out of total 604 reached out children referred to the Child Assistance Booth, **the RPF/GRP and the railway authorities referred 141 children**. (Source: CINI ASHA, Kolkata) Many referral services were conducted from the booth. Among the referrals, 74 were referred to the hospitals, 26 to the drug rehabilitation centre and 180 to the STI (Sexually transmitted infections) clinic.(Source : CINI ASHA, Kolkata)
- In Bangalore, the Sathi team received an overwhelming support from **RPF** while they have **referred nearly 125 children** to shelter homes run by SATHI. (Source: SATHI, Bangalore)
- RPF also extends their support by sending woman constable to accompany girl children at late hours, to visit Child Welfare Committee. (Source: SATHI, Bangalore & Ehsaas Lucknow)

- A mutual understanding and coordination between RPF and Khilti Kaliyan, **Rajasthan** team exists for helping children in need of care & protection. RPF provide support to the staff of Khilti Kaliyaan in contacting new children. During the period, **RPF referred 19** such **children** in Ajmer (10) and Kota (9). (Source: Khilti Kaliyaan – Ajmer & Kota)
- In Bandra, **Mumbai RPF on their own started contacting and referring children to government homes and Child welfare committee** (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- At **Lucknow, Sub Inspector from RPF has been designated as Child welfare officer**. The personnel ensure that all the children, who have been found alone & without care must be provided with immediate support. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)
- **Regular contact with RPF and other authorities has resulted in “easy access on Railway Platforms”**. This has helped in accessing the children and helping them with early intervention. (Source : Balsakha, SATHI, Saathi, Khilti Kaliyaan, CINI ASHA, Balprafulta, Praajak & Concern)

Government & civil society partnership

- The RPF has provided CINI ASHA with a **space to establish the Child Assistance booth** at **Sealdah railway station**. (Source : CINI ASHA, Kolkata)
- The RPF has a **Child Protection Booth** in collaboration with Ehsaas at **Lucknow Railway station** to rescue children. This is operating quite smoothly. The RPF personnel ensure that all found children, who are alone, must meet Ehsaas team (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)
- RPF provided a space to the organization for establishing a **help desk** in their counter. This support has been very helpful to access the platform as well as the children who are in need of care and protection. (Source : SATHI, **Secunderabad**)
- RPF has provided **ID cards to members of the SATHI team**, Hyderabad working on platforms. They extended this support also to other organizations which are a part of the network and are closely working with children at station. **Mr. V.P. Raju, Circle Inspector, RPF**, Secunderabad has been constant source of support. (Source: SATHI. Secunderabad)
- Regular meetings with RPF at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus & Lokmanya Tilak Terminus have developed a good rapport. RPF has started **informing Balprafulta staff whenever they notice any children in difficult situation**. (Source : Balprafulta, **Mumbai**)
- It is noteworthy that RPF team has been especially receptive about the principle of diversion. They regularly seek the support of other agencies to provide protection to children especially girl child found abandoned, runaway or missing. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow)
- Saathi, Mumbai and RPF have developed good rapport. The Saathi team received **100% cooperation in handling of children’s cases**. (Source: Saathi, **Mumbai**)
- RPF and Saathi are jointly monitoring **movement of children using Close Circuit Television (CCTV) at platforms** and reaching out to unattended and vulnerable children (Source: Saathi, **Mumbai**)
- A **special joint outreach (24 hours) has been conducted in Mumbai** to understand the number of children coming to the terminus at different hours and **RPF has provided their support** in this initiative. (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- In **Kanpur, Mr. Satyendra Yadav, Commandant, RPF issued identity cards** to two members of the organization under RPF’s Bal Mitra Yozna. He even distributed general ID cards to work on platforms to all street educators of the organization. (Source : SATHI, Kanpur)

- Making this initiative more effective and at deeper level, **Mr. B.D. Maurya, Inspector GRP** came forward to join him in signing the ID cards. Mr. Maurya has also issued letters, requesting support from RPF officials on other railway stations to trace addresses and reunite children with families. (Source: SATHI, **Kanpur**)
- **Mr. Paramh Mishra, Commandant, RPF Gorakhpur issued identity cards** to all street educators of SATHI working at station. He takes interest in holding a joint monthly meeting with SATHI & RPF team. Mr. Mishra personally interacts with children and counsels their parents once they come in contact. (Source: SATHI, Gorakhpur)
- **Mr. R.R. Padav, Inspector RPF** provided his support in **organizing joint rescue programs** with SATHI in **Pane**. He assured to issue ID cards for SATHI staff working on the station. (Source: SATHI, Pune)

Strengthening the RPF's documentation

- The effort started during the last updated period i.e. in the Railway Children multistakeholder cooperation document *What is and What can be*, has facilitated a relationship building between RPF and SATHI team. Now RPF has started **giving acknowledgement receipt of children contacted at the station**. This helps in the process of home placement of children. (Source: Saathi, Mumbai)
- Regular **monthly meetings with senior inspector of RPF** at all the 3 locations (Mumbai Central, Bandra & Dadar railway Station) & **quarterly meetings with the Commissioner of RPF** have been conducted in order to share the monthly data, training reports and issues & concerns faced during the day to day work. (Source: Saathi, **Mumbai**)
- **Senior commandant RPF Ms. Renu Chibber** facilitated the **issuing of guidelines** to their staff to **maintain records** of all **children**, who have found at station and transferred to organization. (Source: Ehsaas, Lucknow).

Proactive role through community policing

- On every Saturday, RPF provides **free lunch to 60 children of the DIC (Drop-in-centre)** running by the CINI ASHA team. (Source : CINI ASHA, **Kolkata**)
- RPF/GRP collectively rendered their help to **rebuild the space** in front of Udaan, the centre for the children between the age group of 10-14 years. It has resulted in making the space safe and child friendly. (Source : CINI ASHA, **Kolkata**)
- RPF **actively participate in activities organized by Conc'rn team for children's issues**. They participated in a match with children of drop in centre and transit homes of the organization. (Source: Conc'rn, **New Jalpaiguri**)
- RPF **provides space** to the organization within their campus for imparting training to the children. (Source: Concern, **New Jalpaiguri**)
- The **RPF chief security commissioner, Mr. Ajoy Sadany** attended camp^{*} closing program of SATHI and appreciated the work. As a good will gesture during the closing program, RPF **gave the space of the meeting and sponsored tent, chair and snacks for the program**. (Source: SATHI, **Secunderabad**)

* SATHI conducts residential camps in semi rural areas for children where through methodologies like stories, meditation and group discussions, children are encouraged to discover the benefits of living with family as well as recognise the disadvantages of living on the platform. Most camps end with a tearful ceremony where parents come to these locations to take back their children who may have run away for a few months and sometimes many years.

- Personnel from local RPF team **regularly visit DIC** (drop in centre) and reception centre of the organization. As per the need, they offer their support to the organization. There are instances while during the course of urgent restoration of children, RPF personnel provided a temporary personal loan to outreach worker. (Source : Concern , **New Jalpaiguri**)
- During November 2009, RPF **granted the permission for issuing identity cards for the children of Malda Mukhtangan.** (Source : Praajak, Malda)

RPF Officials who have made a noteworthy contribution to the cause of children in need of care and protection

During the considered period, a number of RPF officials have made a remarkable contribution to the cause of children at risk. They have not only supported the ongoing efforts in this regard but also initiated actions to facilitate the rehabilitation process with children as per the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act 2000, amended in 2006. This support came from individuals to teams and from top to ground level personnel.

These contributions are highly meaningful in the course of rescuing, making early interventions, referral and rehabilitation of such children. Clearly, these officials (who have come to our notice) have quite positively influenced the lives of hundreds of children.

Names of the RPF officials		
Location	Officials Name	Designation
Ajmer	Mr. B.L. Meena	Commandant RPF
Ajmer	Mr. Girdhari Lal	Assistant Commandant, RPF
Bangalore	Mr. B.S. Mishra	Senior Commandant of RPF
Gorakhpur	Mr. Paramh Mishra	Commandant, RPF
Howrah	Mr. Subrata Mukherjee	Inspector RPF
Howrah	Mr. Umashankar	Asst Duty Officer RPF
Itarsi	Mr. Vipin Kumar	SI RPF
Kanpur	Mr. Satyendra Yadav	Commandant, RPF
Kota	Mr. Montek Singh	Commandant RPF
Kota	Mr. Santosh Kumar	SI RPF
Kanchapara	Sh. Baichan Singh	Principal RPF Training Centre
Kishanganj	Mr. Sambhit Roy	Inspector RPF
Katihar	Mr. Sanjay K. Prasad	Inspector RPF
Lucknow	Ms. Renu Chibber	Senior Commandant of RPF
Mughalsarai	Mr. Shakib	Division Security Commissioner
Mughalsarai	M.P. Dubey	Inspector, RPF
Mughalsarai	B.K. Singh	SI RPF
Mughalsarai	R.P. Singh	SI RPF
Mughalsarai	Ms. Shabana Khatoon	Constable
Mughalsarai	Mr. A. K. Tiwary	Head constable
Madurai	Mr. Kannan	Inspector, RPF
Madurai	Mr. Ibrahim	Ct. RPF
Madurai	Mr. Selvam	Ct. RPF
Madurai	Mr. Boominathan	Ct. RPF

New Jalpaiguri	Mr. Ashis Sen Gupta	Inspector RPF
New Jalpaiguri	Mrs. Runu Barman	ASI RPF
New Jalpaiguri	Mr. Sunil Mondol	SI RPF
New Jalpaiguri	Mr. Bikash Ghosh	HC RPF
New Jalpaiguri	Ms. Sheela Ghosh	Ct. RPF
New Jalpaiguri	Ms. T S Devi	Ct. RPF
Patna	Mr. Dharmendra Kumar	Inspector RPF
Patna	Mr. Vijay Kumar	SI RPF
Patna	Mr. Gautum Kr	Ct.RPF
Pune	Mr. R.R. Padav	Inspector RPF
Sealdah	Mr. K. Arul Joti	Sr. DSC, RPF
Sealdah	Moh. Amjad	Officer In charge RPF
Secunderabad	Mr. V.P. Raju	Circle Inspector, RPF

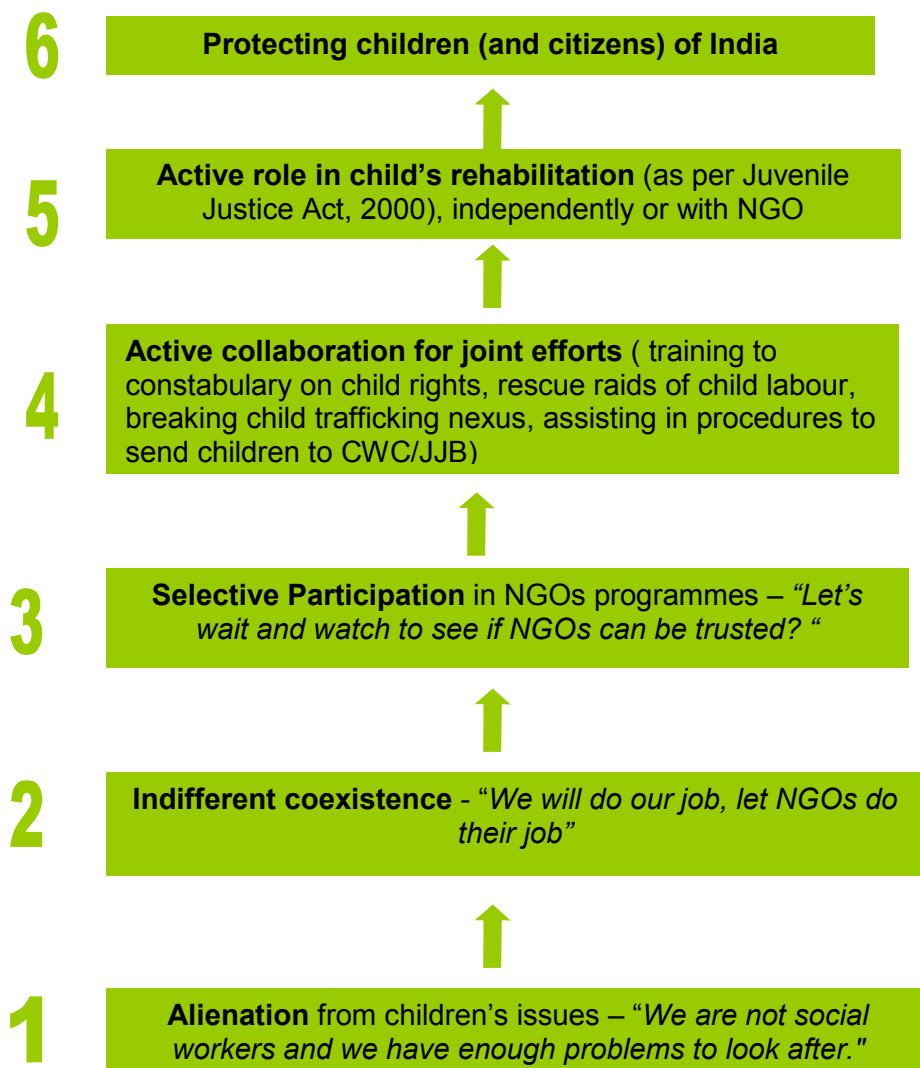
Way Forward

Railway Children's systematic interventions for more than a decade strengthen our belief that for bringing a sustainable change in the lives of these children, role of the system (government and its representatives) is very vital. Since the last update of partners & RPF 's collaborative efforts (**Railway Children multistakeholder cooperation document - What is and What can be**) appreciable efforts have been taken by RPF across the country. This document was an endeavour to reflect how the relationship built is now bearing results, which in turn is positively influencing the lives of the children who are in need of care and protection.

The diagram below depicts different stages of interface between RPF & civil society organizations. It reflects how the partnerships grow from one stage to another - with stage 1 signifying no involvement of the RPF in the issues of children to stage 6 signifying active stage of participation in the children's rehabilitation by upholding its responsibilities as a duty bearer of child rights.

We are happy to share that at present in most of the locations the **partnership between RPF and Railway Children partners are in stages 4 & 5** - here collaborations for joint efforts are in place as well as RPF is playing an active role in the rehabilitation of the children.

STAGES OF COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVE ACTION OF RPF WITH NGOs (RAILWAY CHILDREN PARTNERS) Stages 1- 6



In many locations, RPF has established **Child assistance booth** both on their own and in some places established in collaboration with partner organizations. This has helped them to reach out to hundreds of destitute and alone children, which in turns has prevented their chances of falling prey to risky situations.

Muktangan, an RPF and Praajak's collaboration started from Malda division has now spread to various locations. Stations like Bardhaman & Asansol in Eastern railways, Kharagpur within Southeastern railways, Kishanganj and New Coochbehar within Northeast frontier railways has replicated this model.

Since last update, an increase in thinking towards needs of training, orientation and awareness on children's issues within RPF is quite visible. Recognizing this, RPF officials and their local teams has **proactively participated in training and awareness programs** organized by Railway Children partners on children issues. In many of the locations RPF themselves organized trainings on these issues and they even invited partner organizations to orient their personnel. This interest for learning and preparing themselves to act upon children's issues reflects their willingness to respond to the situation effectively.

RPF Lucknow along with the rest of the railway administration is proactively working to make Lucknow station a **Child Friendly station by 2011**. They are not only helping the children who were lost but also ensuring there is a helping hand available once they land. They have **designated a child welfare officer**, who entirely works in this regard. Training and orientation on these issues is becoming a regular feature.

After collectively working for a period at **Bandra, Mumbai station** with Balprafulta, RPF team has now **started directly referring children** to care homes and CWCs. They share all the information related to children with partner organisation and in case of need seek their help.

The reunification process with family is a very crucial aspect of children's rehabilitation and it requires support from various stakeholders. Since last update in many locations a visible coordination among RPF and partner teams has developed. This has widely facilitated the signing of home placement formats, providing free tickets to take the children for home placement, keeping records, dairy of contact and referral made.

We appreciate the RPF and it's entire team for the kind of support received from them to the cause of children in need of care and protection.

Today with their support hundreds of children have got opportunities to live secure and protected lives. Recognising its own role and positive impact, **we hope and expect that the good practices highlighted in the document will pave the way to institutionalize these practices and help regulate the assistance for very vulnerable children in India found at railway stations.**

Jai Hind!

Getting to street kids before the streets get to them



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