

Giving alms will deteriorate their lives further, say NGOs

Saying no to child-beggars

Anuradha Mane

A group of young volunteers will be conducting a campaign against child-begging in the city with a belief that alms given to a child beggar with the best of intentions deteriorate their lives further.

The volunteers of Dream India and Samidha NGOs will be taking to the streets with the appeal to curb people's natural response of giving alms to child beggars.

The campaign was conceptualised when volunteers of these NGOs found that slum children, who were being imparted education, were using their English speaking skills to ask for alms in areas such as MG Road and the Pune Railway station.

"We taught them so that they could eke out a living for themselves. When we realised that their energy was being diverted in the wrong way, we decided to make citizens aware of the darker side



of begging, as over 10 million children in India beg for a living," said Nupur Nanal, a volunteer with Dream India.

According to the volunteers, the journey of a child beggar starts right from the age of six months when their mothers carry them around while begging. These children grow up fast, become independent by the time they are six years old, and often get lured by the charm of easy money. Tobacco, gambling, pick-pocketing, and petty thefts follow, and child beggars involved in criminal

activities pose a serious threat to social security.

Instead of giving alms to the children, one should contact and support the numerous government agencies, welfare committees, NGOs and institutions working for such children. "If citizens do not stop giving alms, we can never help these children in getting a chance to get off the streets, to get a decent education, and to live a life with dignity and self-respect," says Sachin Mohite, a volunteer with Samidha.

The campaign will be held on November 15 across several centres in the city such as Sarasbaug, Inox, E-Square, Sambhaji Park and the MG Road walking plaza.

The volunteers will conduct presentations, discussions and hold street plays to get the message across. They will also help citizens to contact organisations and orphanages working towards the welfare of street children and orphans.

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Walk-in Interview

A new study room for poor children

Dream India, a team of young software professionals, opened a new study room facility at MM Colony, Aminjikarai on April 1. The study room was inaugurated by Ka. Sivanandhan, headmaster of Thiru-Vi.Ka Higher Secondary School, Aminjikarai.

“We started teaching these young ones in a temple nearby, we have come a long way today and have our own study room,” says S.R. Janakiraman, joint-secretary. The initial phases were tough when the team had to suspend classes during the monsoon, but the determination to move ahead has paid off. Apart from teaching the kids, Dream India Chennai is involved in activities like supporting the education of poor deserving students, helping the or-

phanages around Chennai, conducting medical camps in slums, medical support for poor families and celebrating national functions with poor children.

Dream India is inspired by president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam’s vision of Dream India 2020. “We all share a dream, a dream of a developed India. We have people from software companies, doctors, students and members of local community. Dream India became a registered NGO three months ago,” said Vishnu Srinivasan, a member of Dream India. “We have a team of people across the globe working towards the objective of developed India,” he added. Overall, the organisation has around 200 members.

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