

CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD ABUSE



YUVA Urban Initiatives
Commitment to Inclusive and Just Cities

Contributors

Nitesh Dhawade, Neha Pednekar,
and the entire Childline team

Kritika Mishra

Amol Bhutad

Vindhya Jyoti

Doel Jaikishen

Website: www.yuvaindia.org

Email: info@yuvaindia.org

Twitter: @officialyuva

Instagram: @officialyuva

Facebook: Youth for Unity and
Voluntary Action - YUVA

Published by

YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI)

YUVA Centre

Sector 7, Plot 23, Kharghar

Navi Mumbai - 410210

India

Designed by: Sayali Matkar

December 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Fighting Against Sexual Assault	2
Forced into Child Labour	4
Repeatedly Sexually Abused	6
Ailing and Alone, with Dependent Children	8
Mentally Traumatized and Abused	10
Conclusion	12

INTRODUCTION

Globally, children account for almost half of the world's poor at 49.9 per cent, with 665 million living in multi-dimensional poverty. In India, among the 364 million poor in 2015–16, it was estimated that 156 million (34.5 per cent) are children¹.

Poverty exposes children to many risks. Denied access to basic services and facilities such as water and electricity, functional toilets, safe and secure homes, healthcare and sanitation services, quality schools, etc., children's vulnerability increases manifold. The cycle of deprivation repeats itself unceasingly, and children are unable to realise their potential and lead lives of dignity.

Additionally, in 2017, the Union Ministry for Women and Child Development shared that nearly 40 per cent of India's child population was vulnerable to sexual abuse².

To help children in distress, YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) has partnered with Childline India Foundation to run the 24-hour toll-free emergency Childline service, across different areas of Mumbai and Navi Mumbai and at the Dadar Railway Station. The helpline-based service helps rescue children from difficult situations, providing them the necessary support (medical care, shelter services, emotional support, etc.) as per the needs of the case. In 2018–19 itself, the team responded to more than 700 calls for intervention, and work continued on earlier cases as well.

This booklet presents a short account of some of the ways in which the Childline team has supported children in need over the years. The cases selected represent just some of the vulnerabilities children experience in cities. All case details have been masked to maintain confidentiality.

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/india-poverty-minimum-income-5644342/>

2. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/40-of-kids-vulnerable-ministry/articleshow/56606949.cms>

FIGHTING AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT



It all started one night when Gayatri saw her husband, Rajkumar, touching their 8 year-old daughter, Saloni inappropriately. She was threatened by him to not speak about it to anyone but she fearlessly decided to take action. Gayatri decided to seek help from Mrs. and Mr. Rajendra Patel at whose house she worked as a domestic help. Mr. Rajendra immediately called Childline on 1098 and thus began Gayatri and Saloni's fight against Rajkumar for justice. The YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) Childline team along with Gayatri took Saloni in confidence and she confessed that Rajkumar had in the past asked her to remove her clothes so that he could touch her private parts. She narrated many such instances of sexual assault where she was also threatened by him to not mention these happenings to anyone.

Gayatri, then, lodged an FIR against her husband for sexually assaulting their daughter. What followed was Saloni's medical examination and Rajkumar's arrest. Rajkumar's family, who previously supported her fight, now blamed Gayatri for his arrest and asked her to leave the house. She was also wrongly accused of creating such an issue for the sake of family property. A thorough investigation was conducted where Saloni's statement was taken into consideration. A number of legal processes followed where Gayatri and Saloni were sent to the local Magistrate for recording their statements. Police completed the investigation after recording statements of important witnesses. A chargesheet was filed within 90 days and the case was assigned to a Special Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Court.

The matter was sub-judice and eventually, the Court framed charges within six months after the chargesheet was filed. After considering all statements from witnesses and hearing arguments of both the sides at length, it reserved its judgment. Victory finally came in October 2018, when the Judge convicted Rajkumar and sentenced him to imprisonment of 3 years. He was also directed to pay a fine of INR 5000. The Judge also ordered Rajkumar to pay INR 10,000 to Saloni as compensation. In this case, justice was served swiftly in one and a half years after the chargesheet was filed which is a great achievement.

Today, Saloni is studying in class 7 and Gayatri is working as a domestic help. They both stay near Gayatri's brother's house and are in regular touch with YUI caseworkers.

FORCED INTO CHILD LABOUR



In February 2017, the YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) Childline team received a call. The caller mentioned that a young boy, Aman, working at a repair shop near his residence, was in urgent need of help. The child had been missing for two days since being beaten up by the shop owners. The YUI team was able to trace the child through extensive search efforts, with the caller's help. Though initially hesitant, Aman confided in the team, on being assured of their good intentions.

12-year-old Aman belonged to a small town in Uttar Pradesh. His family could not afford his education due to abject poverty. A relative brought him to Mumbai months ago on the false pretext of education. Here his dreams were shattered, and the nightmare had only just begun. Aman was sold to the repair shop owners for a meagre sum of INR 5,000. He was forced into child labour, toiling hard for many hours in inhuman conditions. The owners found a number of ways to harass him, making him starve for days and beating him for no reason. Aman had somehow managed to escape a couple of days ago and wanted to meet his family.

Without any delay, the YUI team called up 103, the 24-hour helpline for women and children. The police arrived soon, and an FIR was lodged against the shop owners. Aman gave an official statement narrating his plight. Pursuant to the complaint and statements, the police arrested the shop owners. The matter is sub judice currently.

Aman was produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), and placed in a shelter home, first in Mumbai and then in his home district. After three months, he was reunited with his family. He is currently enrolled in the local government school in the eighth standard. Leaving the traumatic episode behind him, Aman now aspires to become an interior designer. He remains in regular touch with the YUI team and discusses his plans with them.

Aman's story had a happy ending. However, there are still many such vulnerable Amans in our society. They have every right to go to school, play games with friends and enjoy their childhood. But instead, they are forced to work at a tender age.

REPEATEDLY SEXUALLY ABUSED



14-year-old Ruma was lured into a relationship by a boy visiting her house for some utility work. He started asking her for sexual favours and when Ruma refused, he began hitting her. The boy used to take her to a dark, dilapidated house in the vicinity and sedate her so she could not even resist whoever came to sexually abuse her. These heinous crimes had been happening for almost 5-6 months. Since Ruma was threatened into silence—the boy said he would kill her parents if she spoke up—she did not report the incident.

Ruma's mother, however, suspected something suspicious. She dialled the 1098 Childline India Foundation emergency helpline for children in distress. The YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) team visited her home and found Ruma sitting outside the house. She seemed to be under the influence of sedatives and alcohol and smelt foul. When she was approached by the team, she started abusing them. They decided to present the case before the District Child Welfare Committee (CWC) as it clearly appeared to be a case of a child in need of care and protection.

Ruma was produced before the District CWC which ordered her admission in a shelter home with a prior medical examination. The doctor who checked her advised immediate surgery for a urinary tract infection which had caused a deep foul-smelling wound. Ruma recovered gradually post-surgery, but required dressing of the wound daily. The YUI caseworker met her regularly at the hospital post-surgery.

Six days into her treatment at the hospital, Ruma ran away. She was found in front of her house in a similar condition in which the team had first rescued her. Ruma was taken to the shelter home again with the help of the police. From then on, the team accompanied Ruma and her mother from the shelter home to the hospital daily for dressing the wounds for the next six months.

Looking at the care, help and positive attitude of the caseworkers, Ruma was filled with remorse and she even apologized to them. She told them what she had gone through and revealed the identity of the abuser. On the basis of Ruma's statement, an FIR was registered against the accused. The accused was arrested pursuant to the FIR and Ruma's statement was also recorded by the police and the concerned magistrate. The matter is currently sub-judice and testimonies of witnesses are yet to be recorded, but we hope that the offender would be brought to justice soon.

Ruma stayed at another shelter home for some more months till her wounds healed completely and then started staying with her mother. She appeared for her SSC examination next year and cleared it. She is continuing her education and is confident of appearing for her HSSC exams soon.

This case testifies the transformation that children's lives can undergo, when rescued from adverse circumstances and given the right opportunities and care.

AILING AND ALONE, WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN



The YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) Childline workers found 20-year-old Reshma under the bridge of a Mumbai suburban station. Severely wounded on the back of her head, she had her 11-month-old baby along with her. The fact that she was also seven months pregnant added to her vulnerability. Sensing the gravity of the situation, the Childline workers immediately took her to the nearest government hospital.

Reshma confided in the team, saying that she had been staying at the nearby railway station for five years. Her young baby was from her husband who had abandoned her. Her pregnancy was the result of her sexual exploitation.

Following persistent requests from the Childline team, the government hospital admitted Reshma late in the night. Doctors performed the required surgery on her head the next morning. In the one-week stay in the hospital, the Childline caseworkers appointed a caretaker for Reshma to maintain the requisite hygiene standards required.

The real challenge, however, was to find a shelter home for Reshma. After knowing of the refusal from one of the shelter homes, the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) too did not provide any help as it declared Reshma unable to take care of her child single-handedly. However, due to the good rapport between the shelter home (which had previously refused her stay) and the Childline team, they agreed to let Reshma stay for two days.

The Childline team kept searching for another shelter home for Reshma and was soon able to find one which also had a hospital, helping take care of her medical needs better, such as getting her wounds dressed regularly.

Reshma seems like a new person today. She is healthy and has also enrolled for a skill building course at the shelter home. Reshma delivered her second male child, a healthy baby, in October 2018. She is permitted to stay at the shelter home as long as she wants. The shelter home is also ready to take care of the education of both her children, which is an added bonus.

In this case, the Childline team had to work beyond the boundaries of the case, in trying to look for the most suitable shelter home for Reshma. Their efforts paid off, and especially looking at the way Reshma has rebuilt her life, the team feels positive that she can secure a better future for herself now.

MENTALLY TRAUMATISED AND ABUSED



One day, the YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) Childline team received a request from Asha to get her granddaughter, Renuka, admitted to a shelter home. The call led to a long struggle for the safety and security of Renuka.

Renuka lost her mother to AIDS when she was just six-years-old, after which she stayed on the pavement with her aged grandmother Asha and her father who was differently abled. Unable to take proper care of Renuka, Asha wanted to admit Renuka to a shelter home.

After the necessary preliminary formalities and visits, Renuka was produced before the concerned Child Welfare Committee (CWC) which directed the YUI team to search for a shelter home for Renuka. What followed was multiple refusals from shelter homes on various grounds.

All through the search, Renuka continued living on the pavement with her grandmother and father where eventually, she started suffering from mental health issues. The YUI team, being aware of the importance of stable mental health, got her admitted to a government hospital for treatment while simultaneously exploring options of other shelter homes. Fortunately, after six months Renuka's mental health improved.

Once Renuka was back to staying with her grandmother and father, she suffered a horrendous incident where she was raped and sexually assaulted by a close friend of hers. The 16-year-old experienced severe mental trauma due to this incident. The team's first priority was, however, to get Renuka admitted to a shelter home before the situation worsened. Eventually, through the support of CWC and the Childline team, Renuka was finally admitted to a shelter home. The team stayed in constant touch with Renuka to help her get used to the environment at the shelter home while simultaneously supporting Asha in all possible ways to fight Renuka's sexual assault case in legal court.

The case eventually took an unfortunate turn when Asha and Renuka both requested Renuka's release from the shelter home. As it turned out later, Asha got Renuka married but her marriage turned out to be an unhappy union as Renuka was being beaten by her drunkard husband and mother-in-law. Renuka came back to Mumbai to stay with Asha and this is when they approached the YUI Childline team again to help them look for a shelter home for Renuka. The Childline team not only helped them find a shelter home but also helped them settle Renuka's marital dispute. Renuka's case is one of constant twist and turns and the Childline continued to help and support them through their struggle. A major achievement for the team as well as Renuka was when a judgment was pronounced in Renuka's case of sexual assault. The accused was convicted and punished with rigorous imprisonment of 7 years and was charged INR 1,000 as fine.

CONCLUSION

This booklet attempted to present just a few cases that the YUVA Urban Initiatives (YUI) team has worked on. We want to do more to help children in distress, stop abuse in its many forms (both in a preventive and responsive capacity) and demand and access justice for every child. Especially with the expansion of our work within the larger Mumbai Metropolitan Region this year, we hope to help secure the lives of more children through our work.

To know more on the **Campaign Against Child Abuse** and to support us, click here:
<https://www.ketto.org/fundraiser/CampaignAgainstChildAbuse>

To know more about the work of YUVA Urban Initiatives, click here:
<https://yuvaurbaninitiatives.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/yui-annual-report-2018-19.pdf>

You could also support us via payment in cheque, payable to 'YUVA Urban Initiatives'.

If you are keen to support the campaign in another way, write to us at communication@yuvaindia.org, and we'll be happy to get in touch and take this forward.

Request you to also help us spread the word on this campaign by sharing this booklet among your networks.



YUVA Urban Initiatives

YUVA Centre,
Sector 7, Plot 23, Kharghar,
Navi Mumbai – 410210 India

Telephone: 91-22-27740970 / 80 / 90

Email: communication@yuvaindia.org

Website: www.yuvaurbaninitiatives.wordpress.com/