



**WE BELIEVE IN A WORLD  
WHERE NO CHILD EVER HAS  
TO LIVE ON THE STREETS**

**Our Mission Story  
2022-2027**

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND, IN INDIA**

**RAILWAY**  
**children**  
No child lost to the streets



# THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE ON THE STREETS OF INDIA EVERY DAY

An estimated 18 million children live on the streets in India, home to one of the largest child populations in the world. Street-connected children are amongst the most marginalised on the planet. In India, they have become an accepted issue in society, are deprived of access to the most basic services and experience extreme harm before and during their time on the streets.

Every five minutes, a child arrives alone at one of India's busiest railway stations and immediately faces violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and trafficking. Scavenging for food, they are beaten, attacked, raped and even killed. For many of these children the streets are not their first experience of violence. Even from birth, a child's journey may be filled with negative experiences, highlighting the need to provide a safe, nurturing environment for every child.

We believe in a world where no child ever has to live on the streets – a huge challenge that requires our most ambitious strategy ever. Alongside the development of outstanding practice and services for street-connected children, we will help to create an environment of people united to protect vulnerable children, positioning ourselves to influence the UN's post-2030 development goals and ensure no child is left behind, wherever we work.

**OUR APPROACH FINDS THE VERY BEST SOLUTIONS AND PRACTICES TO BREAK THE CYCLES OF ABUSE, NEGLECT AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN AND KEEP CHILDREN SAFE. FOR GOOD.**

# WHY WE CONCENTRATE ON TRANSPORT HUBS

Hundreds of thousands of street-connected children pass through transport terminals as they try to escape conflict, abuse, poverty and trauma. For many, public transport represents opportunity and the chance of a new start but the dangers they end up facing can be far worse than the problems they left behind.

It can also make the ideal hunting ground for predators, gangs and criminals seeking to exploit and abuse vulnerable children. Reaching out to these children as early as possible while they are in a moving train or after they arrive at a bus or railway station is crucial for their protection, restoration and rehabilitation. We aim to prevent children from slipping into a life on the street and suffering all of the harm and abuse we know that this can bring.

Over the last 25 years, we have protected more than 100,000 children across 35 railway stations. Evidence indicates that 35,000 children will be at risk in the next five years, across 15 transport terminals.

Our experience and relationships across transport networks provide a unique opportunity to intervene early and protect children before they come into serious harm. Their time on public transport as they make that journey offers a vital window to find them, build a relationship and keep them safe.



# WHO WE ARE



## OUR VISION

We believe in a world where no child ever has to live on the streets.



## OUR MISSION

To create and enable sustainable change for children living alone and at risk on the street.



## OUR AIM FOR 2027

We will evidence and demonstrate effective and sustainable safeguarding solutions around transport terminals where children could be prevented from slipping into street life.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

## We stand for children

- The children who don't have a voice.
- The invisible children.
- The children struggling to survive across the Indian railway network every day.
- The generations of children suffering repeated cycles of abuse.

**WE STAND FOR CHILDREN, THEIR CHILDHOODS AND THEIR FUTURES! WILL YOU?**



## THESE FIVE VALUES GUIDE OUR WORK



### NEVER GIVE UP

Face challenges head on.



### HAVE COURAGE

Push boundaries. Think big.



### EARN TRUST

Be Honest. Always act with integrity.



### SHOW COMPASSION

Be kind and show respect to all.



### NURTURE TALENT

Encourage growth. Enable others.








# OUR CHARTER FOR CHILDREN

All children have the same rights and are entitled to the same protection. Wherever they are and whatever their story, children are children. No child should ever have to live on the streets. It is unacceptable for any child to be abused, exploited and left alone to survive and we must build a movement of like-minded people who are inspired to stand with us.





We believe that if we want the world to join together and help us to create systemic change, we must give children and young people a voice. If we want to create a movement of people, committed to our mission, we must amplify these voices and we can't do that alone. We are developing our Charter for Children with children so that they can influence how we work, who we collaborate with and how we unite the public to help us ensure no child is left behind.



## We will build consensus around the conviction that:

-  We all have a part to play in protecting our most vulnerable children
-  No child found at risk should ever be ignored or passed by
-  Abuse is simply unacceptable in the family and in communities
-  All children have the right to a safe and nurturing family environment where they are loved
-  All children have the right to an education to help them reach their potential and thrive.

## We want the public to join us in standing up for vulnerable children by:

-  Not ignoring a child on the streets
-  Reporting any incidence of abuse and exploitation
-  Respecting children's views and listening to them
-  Challenging harmful cultural perceptions and practices.

As we develop our Charter for Children further, we will ensure that children remain actively involved in harnessing support from all our key stakeholders.

Our charter will help us to build activities with children at the centre and enable us to strengthen conversations and activity with key influencers and partners.

**AS WE CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS, INFLUENCE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ENSURE NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND, THIS CHARTER AND THE VOICES OF CHILDREN WILL BE AT THE HEART OF OUR VALUES AND ACTIONS.**



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Since 1996, we've built RCI into a stable and resilient Indian entity and achieved landmark milestones to protect children surviving on the streets:



Reached and protected 79,000 children and families across India over the past 12 years. Including reintegration with their families, providing safe shelter, nutrition, education, medical and psychosocial support and assistance to vulnerable families.



Demonstrated a child-friendly station model, informing Railway Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) on child protection that snowballed into the first child protection guidelines for children in contact with the Indian Railways being rolled out across 17 railway zones at more than 140 railway stations across India.



Appointed the key resource agency on child protection by the Indian Railways, co-creating SoPs to build more than 140 child-friendly railway stations and a community of more than 46,000 child protection champions across in India.



Worked in partnership with India's child protection systems including more than 15 child care institutions, and other NGOs and experts to contribute to a protective environment for children.



Rolled out media and awareness campaigns across railway platforms, educating over 1,100,000 railway passengers on child protection.



Pivoted our programme work to provide emergency relief services during the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 18,000 children and families across 30 slum communities.



We couldn't have achieved any of this alone. We work hand-in-hand with key partners bringing together the police, social welfare officers, community leaders, other government stakeholders and children themselves to build the most effective solutions for children in contact with transport hubs across India.

Over the next five years, it is more critical than ever that we come together from across a range of sectors in the country: government, civil society, development partners and the business world, to consolidate our expertise and empower other key players to create maximum, sustainable change for generations to come.

We must build on our success and knowledge to create and evidence solutions that can be scaled up across the country.

As the world commits to a decade of action towards achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals, it is vital that no child is left behind.

**AND SO, OUR AIM AS WE SET OFF FOR 2027 IS TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND.**

# OUR NEW STRATEGY MODEL FOCUSES ON FOUR KEY ACTION AREAS FOR CHANGE

During the last ten years, our strategy has concentrated on creating change at three levels: on the street, in communities and with governments.

We have made significant progress during that time and delivered compelling results to inform our future work.

During the last year of our previous strategy, we began the process of reviewing our work through a theory of change model. This deep analysis into all our programmes, the contexts in which we operate, and the experiences of street-connected children, has informed and underpinned the development of our new Indian strategy. It has enabled us to set goals and design interventions that will lead us to achieve our aim of leaving no child behind.

Our 'three step change agenda' as it was previously known, has evolved, adding new learning and practice which tie all our actions together and weave new core elements throughout our work. In addition to hands-on work with children, families and communities and our collaborations with the Indian Railways and child protection agencies, we are expanding our work to include more transport hubs and focusing on the development of research and evidence through the transformation of the Delhi-Howrah rail network (one of the largest in the country). This convergence model will bring together a cohort of railway stakeholders for child protection.

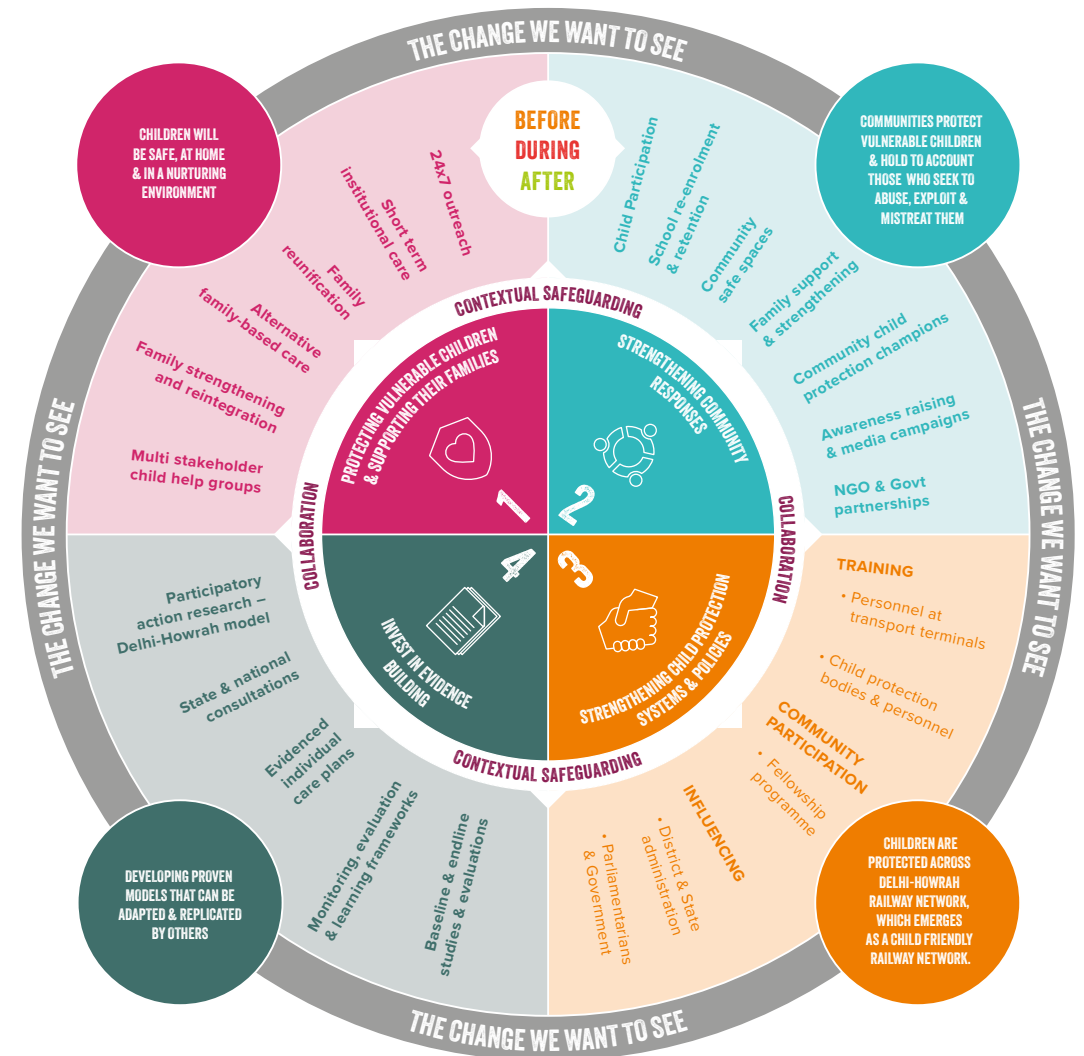
Our aim is to create programme models and practice that can be replicated, evidenced and used to support other organisations as we collaboratively position ourselves to influence the post-2030 development goals.

A strong evidence base will enable us to demonstrate to policy makers, influencers and budget holders the value, impact and need for coordinated, systemic efforts to protect the most vulnerable children in society.

Our new strategy model focuses on four key action areas for change in order to protect the most vulnerable children before during and after they are lost to the streets:

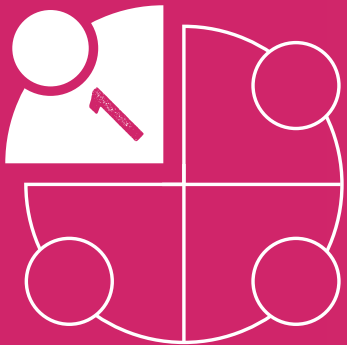
1. **Protecting vulnerable children and supporting their families**
2. **Strengthening community responses**
3. **Strengthening child protection systems and policies**
4. **Strengthening the evidence base**

At the heart of this model is a focus and dedication to collaborating with others and the development of contextual safeguarding solutions, to protect all children from harm and abuse. We will do this by addressing the underlying causes, as well as the effects and is therefore prominent in all four of our action areas for change.



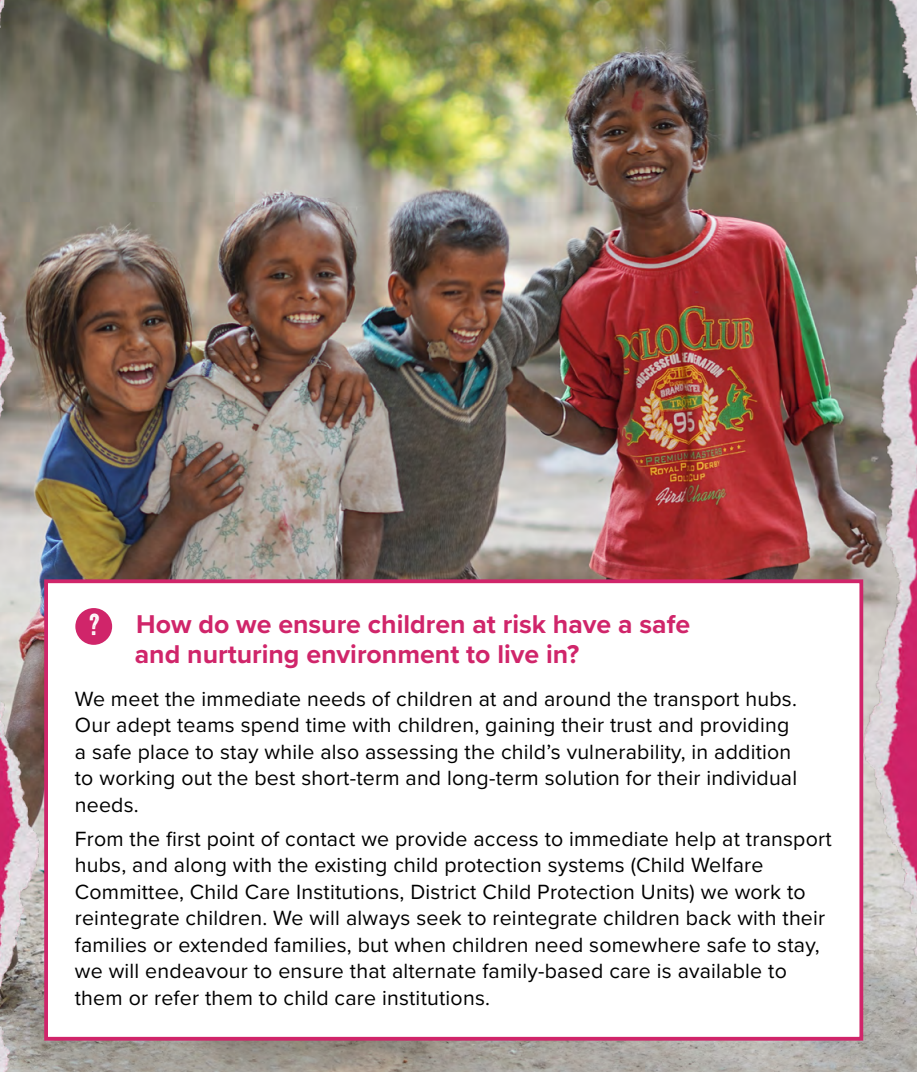
The following pages explain in more detail how each element of the model will combine to achieve our goal for 2027, leaving no child behind, wherever we work.





## CHANGE AREA 1: PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING THEIR FAMILIES

We will keep children safe and enable them to stay in a nurturing family environment where their rights are ensured and fulfilled. We will build safety nets and develop programmes and services to the highest standards to protect vulnerable children traversing through transport hubs, at risk of running away or being lost to the streets, ensuring an improved quality of life.



### ? How do we ensure children at risk have a safe and nurturing environment to live in?

We meet the immediate needs of children at and around the transport hubs. Our adept teams spend time with children, gaining their trust and providing a safe place to stay while also assessing the child's vulnerability, in addition to working out the best short-term and long-term solution for their individual needs.

From the first point of contact we provide access to immediate help at transport hubs, and along with the existing child protection systems (Child Welfare Committee, Child Care Institutions, District Child Protection Units) we work to reintegrate children. We will always seek to reintegrate children back with their families or extended families, but when children need somewhere safe to stay, we will endeavour to ensure that alternate family-based care is available to them or refer them to child care institutions.

**Despite laws and measures to protect children, they continue to get separated from families, slip through the cracks and face different kinds of violations, abuse, and exploitation while traversing through transport hubs in India. Train and bus stations are witnessing large scale movements of children arriving alone and at risk, requiring immediate action to ensure they have access to care, safe homes and education, before they take to a life on the street.**

We will work towards improving the quality of life of every child by creating safe spaces for children, strengthening families and communities and collaborating with transport authorities and child protection systems. At Railway Children India, we will continue to work with children and their families before, during and after they are on the streets.

### Our strategy will focus on:

- Supporting parents and families where children are at a heightened risk of separation. We will help them to build resilience and tackle the issues that drive children to the streets by referrals and linkages to social security schemes and services, emotional guidance to improve the parent-child relationship and facilitating positive parenting.
- Working with the transport sector to identify and protect children early in their journey to the street and before they come to serious harm.
- Ensuring children are moved to the best possible environment to keep them safe in the short-term and for them to flourish in the long-term.
- Strengthening alternative, family-based care options for children in need of short or long-term shelter.

### By 2027:

- We will reach and protect 35,000 at-risk children across 14 railway stations and one bus terminal before they take to a life on the streets.
- The District Child Protection Units (DCPUs), child care institutions, Child Welfare Committee, allied departments and child protection committees will work collaboratively to reunify children with their families, provide post family restoration support and ensure reunified children continue to stay with their families who have the capacity to care and protect them.
- We will improve the child engagement and family reunification process within government systems.
  - We will promote family-based care within 15 childcare institutions where children rescued from 15 transport terminuses will be referred for short and long-term care.
  - 15 DCPUs will be trained on individual childcare plans, the family reintegration process and child safeguarding.

**Working with children and their families before, during and after they are on the streets is complex but by collaborating and empowering others, we can create life changing outcomes.**

**TOGETHER, WE WILL KEEP CHILDREN SAFE AND IN A NURTURING FAMILY ENVIRONMENT WHERE THEY CAN ATTEND SCHOOL AND THRIVE.**



## CHANGE AREA 2: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESPONSES

**We will work in partnership with communities in and around transport hubs, helping them to create environments that are hostile to abuse and where people are equipped to play their part in protecting all vulnerable children.**

We will build stronger communities where it is unacceptable for any child to be abused, exploited and left alone to survive and where people feel compelled and equipped to challenge this where they see it.



### ? What is contextual safeguarding?

Contextual safeguarding focuses upon protecting all children from harm and abuse within the environments outside of the family home, such as on public transport, in retail settings or on the streets. It relies on partnerships between public sector services, civil society and local communities including street vendors, transport providers, and individuals, so that everyone is aware of possible warning signs and how to report or respond to them. Those with influence over the physical environment are able to make improvements, including changes to how and when spaces are used, so that those settings become safer and young people are better protected.

**Our efforts will concentrate on strengthening safeguarding responses in and around transport hubs where we know high numbers of children are at risk. We will work in partnership with the community to identify and protect vulnerable children before and whilst they are on the streets.**

Working with slum communities in and around the railway and bus stations, we will ensure they care and protect their children better. We will also work with communities to strengthen the families of children being reunified so that they don't get separated again. Our work with the passengers will help them to recognise their role in protecting vulnerable children and understand how they can play their part.

### **Building these important partnerships, together we will:**

- Increase the capacity of communities in and around transport hubs to better protect their children.
- Make transport spaces safer for vulnerable children by bringing together key stakeholders to collaborate on safeguarding.
- Enhance communication and awareness across the transport networks to ensure that vulnerable children are referred to us for support swiftly and appropriately.
- Collaborate with like-minded NGOs and civil society organizations.

### **By 2027 we will:**

- Strengthen the capacity and resilience of parents, families and communities to create a safe nurturing environment for children at home, reducing the number of children at a high risk of separation so they don't leave home in the first place.
  - We will work across 11 slum communities around the railway stations to make sure they are better equipped to care for their children.
  - Families will be followed-up for up to 18 months to ensure children are safe and continuing their education, and don't feel the need to leave home again.
- Raise awareness of the experiences of vulnerable and street-connected children, the harm of violence against children and the ways in which passengers and the public can respond appropriately.
  - We will reach the public with key messages through awareness campaigns in and around railway stations.
  - 100,000 passengers will be educated on child safeguarding to understand their role in protecting children.

**Strengthening the capacities of communities around transport settings will create a safe environment where society looks out for vulnerable children.**

**TOGETHER, WE CAN TRANSFORM  
THE LIVES OF STREET-CONNECTED  
CHILDREN AND ENSURE THAT  
NO CHILD IS LEFT BEHIND.**





### CHANGE AREA 3: STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

**We will work closely with policy makers, government officials and civil society to find and implement ways to strengthen and better resource child protection systems so that no child is left behind.**

Whilst social and government structures and public policies are in place to protect the most vulnerable, we know that – despite the best intentions – there are many gaps in the system that allow children at risk to repeatedly slip through the cracks and into serious danger.

Limited capacity, overstretched resources and organisations working in isolation from each other are all factors that make it difficult for India's child protection systems to function as well as they should. We will coordinate and co-deliver services with local government agencies and bodies to strengthen their skills and capacity to provide effective child protection.



**Despite existing child protection mechanisms, children are increasingly transiting through the Indian rail and bus networks in high numbers. The problem is desperately acute on the Howrah-Delhi mainline network which is a major source of transit and lacks a coordinated child protection net.**

We will demonstrate a convergence model that connects railway and district officials and can be replicated across the mainline. Our innovative programmes will enable the railways and child protection stakeholders to collaborate and coordinate to activate child protection mechanisms and protect and restore children back to their families or alternate family-based care.

**We cannot create the change at the scale it is needed alone, so we will:**

- Collaborate with key partners to galvanise national action.
- Develop and evidence effective safeguarding solutions that can be replicated and adopted on a system-wide level.
- Advocate for improved policy and provision of children's services at a national and international level.
- Reduce the number of children in institutional care by driving the case for safe models of alternative family-based care.

**By 2027 we will:**

- Strengthen and build the capacity of railway and transport officials across the Delhi-Howrah network and demonstrate a coordinated child protection net.
  - Build the safeguarding capacity of 5000 railway police force and staff, government railway police & police officers.
  - Build the capacity of railway stakeholders at 64 railway stations to protect 20,000 children.
  - Train and educate District Child Protection Units across 34 districts to coordinate stakeholders to rescue children and support families to successfully reintegrate them.
- Develop a core of trained champions to work with railway and district authorities on a four-year child protection fellowship programme to ensure community participation.
  - 34 individuals selected to undergo training and the responsibility of day-to-day facilitation of convergence between district and railway stakeholders.
  - Provide mentoring support to District Child Protection Units in case management related queries.
- Influence and enable a multi stakeholder model to protect and sustainably restore children found at risk across the transport network.
  - District Magistrates will bring together different child protection mechanisms across the Delhi-Howrah railway network and pilot across strategic locations.
  - Demonstrate an effective and coordinated child protection model across 64 major railway junctions.

**TOGETHER WE WILL BE STRONGER  
AND WE WILL LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND,  
WHEREVER WE WORK.**





## CHANGE AREA 4: INVEST IN EVIDENCE BUILDING

**We will evidence effective and sustainable safeguarding solutions for street-connected children, demonstrating how we transform childhoods and the true impact of these interventions on their lives and their families. Building outstanding evidenced services will enable us to establish programme models and practice that can be replicated.**

The data available about children in street situations is extremely limited. National data collection systems are not designed to capture these children as they do not live in households. Consequently, they are too easily overlooked by policy makers as they allocate public funding and develop programmes.



**Whilst data collection tools for counting children on the streets are helpful in amplifying conversations at government level, it is vital that we understand the issues that drove them there and their experiences whilst on the street.**

**For us to influence change at a national level and to achieve real impact at scale, it is also critical that we can evidence the impact of our services on the well-being of children and their families.**

### By 2027 we will:

- Commission participatory action research wherein children, families, child protection authorities and NGOs will continuously review and give feedback on 'what is working' and 'what is not working' with the convergence model. Feedback and findings documented and discussed with 34 district authorities, 64 railway station authorities, respective state government and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
- Ensure children's views and voices sit at the heart of our research and evaluation.
- Demonstrate a standardised child-friendly transport network model across the Delhi-Howrah transport network that can be replicated across the Indian Railway Network, and potentially extended or adapted to other transport networks.
- Evidence effective safeguarding solutions, demonstrating their impact.
- Anchor state and national consultations with like-minded organisations working with street connected children to combine our respective data on street-connected children and their experiences.
- Collaborate with academic researchers to grow understanding of solutions.
- Identify and measure gaps and opportunities in child protection systems.

**BUILDING A STRONG EVIDENCE  
BASE WILL PROVIDE A  
PLATFORM FOR US TO  
INFLUENCE AND ENSURE THAT  
NATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTION  
LEAVES NO CHILD BEHIND.**



# TOGETHER TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

No matter where they come from, all children are entitled to the same protection and have the same rights – the right to a nurturing family environment, health, education, nutrition, and the chance to fulfil their potential.

No child should face danger, abuse, exploitation or violence. Children are children and no child should ever have to live on the street.

We are totally committed to our mission, and we will push the boundaries to overcome the challenges that will face us along the way.

Our collaborations and efforts with other passionate people and agencies are strengthening all the time and together we will ensure no child is left behind.

**IF YOU BELIEVE NO CHILD  
SHOULD EVER HAVE TO  
LIVE ON THE STREETS AND  
ABUSE IS UNACCEPTABLE,  
PLEASE JOIN US.**





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**children** RAILWAY  
No child lost to the streets