

Street Children

The Editorial 'Street Children: A Window to Reality' (1) deals mainly with the problems faced by these children but does not offer any solutions. The suggestions offered are superficial and would give rise to more problems.

The Editorial reminds me of an anecdote told by the well known writer Khushwant Singh. Reporting on an interview conducted long time ago with some prospective candidates of the Delhi Municipal Corporation elections, he put a poser to them "Suppose a destitute family with children takes shelter in your garage while you were away on a holiday. there are no amenities in the garage such as water and electricity. what would you do?" They all said they would generously allow them to stay on, would provide water since there were children. Another went even further and offered to provide electricity. Khushwant Singh's final observation was that they were all missing the main problem in their eagerness to appease the family. none of the persons interviewed realized that the family were trespassers who had no business to be there in the first place and should have to be ejected.

I would likewise want to point out that there should be no street children in the first place and no amount of cosmetic surgery would help them unless the basic problem was dealt with in the first place. The women living on the street the casual sex workers have no help from the family welfare workers. they continue to have children, mostly from unknown fathers, and grow up to be street children. it is unclear why no policy has been devised or why no person comes forward with the suggestion that these women can be provided with IUCDs or injections to make

them temporarily sterile. Misguided ideas of personal freedom do not allow us in India to follow the rigidly enforced one child norm of china so children are allowed to be born with no facilities for their upkeep. They are looked upon with sympathy not realizing that they are eating into the national wealth, causing social discord and law and order problems.

The NGOs supporting them are not doing so for altruistic considerations. Most of them are supported by heavy donations mostly from Western countries including the Scandinavian countries and Holland who support these causes for their own calculations and long term gains. If such NGOs wanted, the women's organisations could help educate these women about family planning and the need to stop birth of unwanted illegitimate children. Instead they give publicity and photo opportunity to a dozen children born to young and adolescent mothers and sex-workers.

It need not be emphasized that all these street children stand no chance and would grow up to be street children who will later have voting rights—a fact that may be useful to some but would undoubtedly be a source of worry to most of us.

By providing more amenities at the street level for these children, their parents will be encouraged to reproduce further and the relief will never be able to keep up with the needs. The only solution is to strike at the very root of the production line.

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REFERENCE

1. Sethi G.R. Street children—A window to the reality (editorial). *Indian Pediatr* 2004; 41: 219-220.