

# Cross connections

: the partnership  
model of CHILDLINE India

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## Preface

*"Can I call you if I'm in trouble?"*

*"I want to go back home. Will you take me?"*

*"How do we ensure we reach out quickly to the child?"*

*"Are there enough of us to meet the demands of the thousands on the streets?"*

Children related services are few in India. Access to them is even worse. The basic needs of children living on the streets are many and varied. In this scenario, helplines provide that crucial link between children in need of care and protection and the available services. For children with different needs, who call in anytime, anywhere, and for anything, they act as a one-point contact while a telephone helpline facilitates instant access to

support, advice, active intervention or just a listening ear.

We at CHILDLINE, believe that for a helpline to be successful and effective in reaching out to the millions of children deprived of their childhood, we need to work in a partnership framework. A framework that recognizes that:

- a helpline cannot operate in isolation
- all partners involved in the helpline share a reciprocal relationship
- each partner has clear and definite roles in the partnership model. This leads to a feeling of joint ownership towards the model.
- All partners share the vision, mission and the successes of the model.

## The CHLDLINE Story

This document is an illustration of the partnership model of CHLDLINE India taking the reader through a journey of the origin, the preparatory stage and finally the partnership model as it stands today.

It took only a few key elements of CHLDLINE to appeal to all partners involved for a shared philosophy to emerge. Bound by the core elements of this philosophy, the CHLDLINE partnership model is all about joint responsibility and forged alliances, providing to every child in distress, a better childhood.

Preparing the ground

*CHLDLINE Kiska? (Who does CHLDLINE belong to?)*

*CHLDLINE Mera, CHLDLINE Tumhara ( To Me, You)*

*CHLDLINE Hamara, CHLDLINE Hum Sab Ka! (To All of us!)*



At every meeting, party, picnic or encounter with street children, this slogan is thundered by a hundred young voices. It is more than just a slogan however; it is a philosophy. A philosophy of partnership, of networking, of linkages. A philosophy that states that CHLDLINE does not only belong to the

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organisations that constitute it or to the partners who fund it or to the Governments that support it. It belongs to everyone.

The multiple ownership to CHILDLINE, involving various sections of society (children, non government organisations, institutions, donors, Government) is the crux of CHILDLINE's effectiveness.

CHILDLINE originated as a concept based on the demands of street children of Mumbai, for a day-night emergency facility that they could call for any problem. As children



shared their problems, the idea for a one-point contact for different facilities took root. Phone was one obvious choice of a medium to reach out instantly to children in distress. Working in close partnerships with children, youth, Organisations and different systems was another. Children in emergency on one end of the phone line had to be linked to a well-connected network of services. Services that existed. No new shelter, no new hospital, no new infrastructure was to be built. What was needed and obtained was, the effective use of resources provided by organisations working with children.

## The CHILDLINE Story

CHILDLINE also had to be easily accessible. Since street children are a mobile unit, the easy to remember toll free phone number had to be national. India had signed the UN convention for the Rights of the Child. Using its ratification as a lobbying tool, CHILDLINE India partnered with the Government Telecom Department, VSNL and was allotted a special toll-free number (1098) for children in difficult circumstances.

*Subsequently, toll free numbers have been allotted to helplines for women and HIV-AIDS.*

### Sowing the seeds

The ground prepared, CHILDLINE launched as a national 24 hours free phone emergency service for children in need of care and protection in 1996.

Calls coming in at CHILDLINE, range from shelter, medical, death, repatriation or abuse, emotional support and guidance, to calls for information about services for children or just calls to speak to



## The CHILDLINE Story

someone who cares. The effective partnerships formed along the growth curve are responsible for the rapid expansion of CHILDLINE as a service. In just about 5 years, CHILDLINE is now operational in 38 different cities of the country responding to nearly 2 million calls from children in need of care and protection, till Feb 02.

The thread of partnership running through the CHILDLINE service and its functions helps form the core beliefs and the ideology of its existence. A strong partnership with children forms the basic credo of every call being

important. Integrating the child rights perspective is the credo of the importance of the child's participation in his or her intervention. The credo of transparency and accountability stresses on the non-hierarchical aspect of partnerships. And it is the firm stand based on the credo CHILDLINE cannot work alone, that has constituted CHILDLINE into a special family of interlinkages and networking, helping the helpline reach out and provide quality service to children in distress.

A fruitful venture-  
partnerships blossom

### A fruitful venture-partnerships blossom

CHILDLINE's partnership philosophy is the backbone of its existence. It is a partnership initiated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (GOI) between state governments, NGOs, the corporate sector, UNICEF, concerned individuals and children. This segment illustrates the various partnerships forged along the way gradually as CHILDLINE moved from one city to another, linking more and more children to long term services and integrating them into the CHILDLINE family.



*Name : Krishna*

*Age : 16 years*

*Nature of call : Shelter*

*A concerned doctor called CHILDLINE Trivandrum to seek shelter for Krishna whose both kidneys had been damaged. Krishna, a street child had run away from his home in Salem (200 Kms away from Trivandrum). CHILDLINE provided shelter and vocational assistance. Krishna had slim chances of survival and as his health deteriorated, doctors advised specialised treatment. Subsequently, CHILDLINE*

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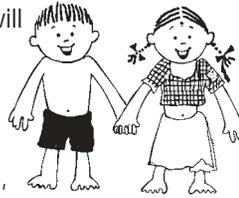
*Trivandrum partnered with CHILDLINE Cochin that provided assistance to Krishna during his treatment at a specialised charitable hospital in Cochin. While repatriating Krishna, the team faced apathy of the locals who suspected the team to be involved in organ trading, but with the help of local authorities in the village, CHILDLINE was able to dispel their doubts. The team also ensured that Krishna was well looked after by his family. CHILDLINE mobilized some funds for Krishna from the Rotary Club and other concerned individuals.*

*A number of medical college practitioners also pitched in to sponsor a large part of Krishna's medicine. Currently, Krishna is at his home looked after by his mother. A partner organisation in Salem is looking after Krishna's follow up. Krishna does not have more than a few years left to his life, but CHILDLINE Trivandrum, CHILDLINE Cochin and CHILDLINE Salem along with the local community, the doctors of the medical college and the individual donors for his treatment are engaged in constant follow up to ensure that Krishna is able to enjoy his remaining years.*

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### Partnership with children

Children have been and will always be the most effective partners of CHILDLINE. Central to conceptualizing the service, children's involvement is paramount in evaluating, suggesting and participating in any decision regarding CHILDLINE, which in turn involves and revolves around them. And the most effective awareness method remains, spreading the CHILDLINE message through children who volunteer their services for CHILDLINE.



*When Sonu, a 10 year old street child refused to stay at a shelter despite high fever on account of malaria, the CHILDLINE team got support from his friend, Kundan who promised to look after Sonu and inform CHILDLINE in case of any emergency. CHILDLINE also did regular follow up and with the help of Kundan, was able to convince him to stay at the infirmary. Today Sonu, Kundan and CHILDLINE are best of friends!!!*

CHILDLINE carries forward the voices of children, expressed at various participatory fora, to lobby for policies. *Policies for instituting sensitisation workshops for the police or hospital staff or*

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*grant of space for a shelter home for girls are some of the success stories.*

#### Partnership with youth

*Majid knows everytime a new child comes to his "area", the railway station of Alwar. A rickshaw puller by profession, Majid, aged 19 years, has been a strong ally of CHILDLINE.*

*Regular calls from him to the centre have helped the CHILDLINE team to reach out to children who have run away from home, are lost or go missing.*



The need to involve the youth who have grown up as street children, came from the fact that they are the biggest resource when it comes to reaching out to the child. Various partnerships emerged from this need: *groups of children at railway stations volunteered to become "watchers", calling in every time they saw a lost child or a child being abused; street youths volunteered for outreach programmes telling people about CHILDLINE and encouraging people to start calling in; migratory street children who travel from one city to another spread CHILDLINE awareness besides comparing the quality of services across cities*

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*that offer us invaluable feedback.* In all CHILDLINE cities, the phones are staffed predominantly by youth who have been in difficult circumstances themselves in their childhood and now wish to reach out to other children.

#### Partnership with organisations

*When CHILDLINE Mumbai sought measures to rehabilitate children who had been abused by the director of a shelter home thereby dissolving the shelter*



*management following interventions of CHILDLINE, many organisations working with children in the city linked up with CHILDLINE. Their response was overwhelming!*

*While one organisation offered vocational training, another agreed to conduct regular educational classes for children. Yet another organisation pitched in to offer counseling support and many others helped conduct regular outreach and follow up with the children. This strong organisational support helped CHILDLINE follow up on institutional child abuse and focused attention on the hitherto neglected area of licensing and monitoring childcare institutions.*

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The above example amply illustrates that aspect of CHILDLINE partnership model which stresses on utilising the existing resources of organisations working in the city. Apart from the effective use of resources, this approach also facilitates formation of a strong network of organisations working with children. The voluntary sector of the CHILDLINE city thus partners in working towards child related issues of common concern. This involves identifying gaps in services, training needs in the city and child protection issues towards the ultimate goal of a child friendly city.

Partnership with media

Media has been a strong ally of CHILDLINE that focuses on reaching out to children at the grassroots. This involves spreading awareness amongst children and the general public about the service and also awareness about the ground reality of children in crisis situations without stereotyping. A child-friendly media as partners of CHILDLINE can be very effective in sensitising, protecting and advocating the rights of children. *Instances of publishing missing children photographs in leading*



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*newspapers free of cost, printing appeals for specific funds for children, publishing success stories have increased the effectiveness of CHILDLINE in cities.*

This learning came early, when CHILDLINE in its early stages, was fearing a closure on account of scarcity of fund. *It took just one article in the newspaper about CHILDLINE and its work that saved the service from shutting down. Many well wishers wrote in wanting to contribute in cash and kind, and CHILDLINE sailed through with their support!*

Partnerships with the Allied Systems

The number of tasks CHILDLINE finds itself dealing with are huge: to make life less difficult on the streets, to ensure that a domestic child labour is not abused, to help find missing children, to repatriate them, to stop the trafficking of children, to help children find education, medical health or even a family to take them in.



It is evident that CHILDLINE cannot function alone! We need partners who could be our

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allies or friends at anytime - a cohesive group that we term as the Allied Systems. This includes the police, the education, the labour, the telecom, the health departments, the juvenile justice system, and the transport system amongst other concerned individuals.

It is not easy to work out alternative solutions to systems but it is even difficult to take them along. CHILDLINE's partnership is about building alliances within the systems-working hand in hand with these various systems that come in contact with the child and to make them more accessible and child-friendly.

*So when a prominent government hospital in Mumbai refused to admit an HIV positive child, CHILDLINE realised the importance of sensitising the systems and has ever since worked towards creating a child friendly environment. Now the same hospital houses a CHILDLINE centre, ensures that CHILDLINE children get free and preferential treatment at the hospital and organises community outreach camps for children!*

*This partnership also enabled CHILDLINE Varanasi to get support from the Inspector general of Police who sent escorts with the CHILDLINE team to repatriate a child to his*

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*town under curfew. Instances like the Lucknow administration allowing free state travel for CHILDLINE work, Patna's health system providing a free medical fund for children, Vishakhapatnam doctors treating free of cost, Mumbai and Chandigarh's premier hospitals giving space for a CHILDLINE center and even the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment providing emergency funds to set up crisis centres post disaster, are positive instances of partnerships with the Allied Systems.*

Partnerships with the corporate sector

It is always easy to get the corporate sector to donate money. It is always difficult to get them to donate anything more than that. Involvement costs much more than a donation. An involvement based on the perspective of child rights for child protection. This was worked out as partnerships should be, by a process of argument and debate until consensus was reached. *Today Tata Consultancy Services(TCS) has designed our computer programme called*



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*ChildNET that enables us to document our calls nationally. Ogilvy & Mather (O&M) has designed our brand image campaign. McKinsey & Co. takes us into the 21st century by enabling us to strategise and plan for the future. Arthur Anderson taught us the basics of accounting. PricewaterHouse & Coopers (PwC) has helped us develop indicators that will help evaluate ourselves.*

These partnerships have changed the way we see our world and have hopefully helped the corporate sector to see the child on the street differently.

Partnership with bilateral / multilateral agencies

The partnerships with bilateral/ multilateral agencies like the UNICEF , Ashoka Innovators for the Public, National Lotteries Charity Board, Schwaab Foundation have provided enriching experiences keeping in view the fact that these agencies have a world wide scope with numerous child protection and child related programmes. CHILDLINE as a network has grown in the country through support provided by them both in terms of finances and in expertise. The global village concept rings through as multilateral agencies have helped

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CHILDLINE to form inter country partnerships and providing access to technical expertise from other countries as well.

Partnerships with civil society

*CHILDLINE, Patna received a call from a concerned adult about 12-year- old, Nancy who had run away from her home, in Siliguri, (a small town in Eastern India) on account of physical abuse by her father. Nancy although scared of her father wanted to go back home. However, she did not know*



*her home address. The CHILDLINE team accompanied Nancy to Siliguri and figured out an innovative way to locate her family. Nancy belonged to a community called the Marwari community. Therefore CHILDLINE located a shopkeeper of the same community and explained this situation. The shopkeeper made CHILDLINE get in touch with the President of the Marwari Association in Siliguri, who was aware that the girl had been missing and knew the family. Since it involved a family problem, he suggested that the community leadership address this issue and that a separate meeting with the father be arranged*

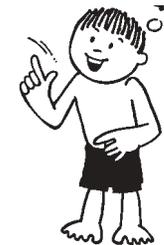
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*before the girl was repatriated. On meeting with the community president and CHILDLINE team member, Nancy's father acknowledged his harsh behaviour, agreed to treat her well and be more sensitive to her needs. The community President assured of regular follow up.*

This aspect of partnership with concerned individuals and others of the civil society has not only proved to be the greatest resource of referrals for children but also of ensuring long-term rehabilitation. Observant and concerned individuals have been the first to report abuse or violence in their neighbourhood or locate missing children. Many calls have also been

successfully responded to with the help of the society who have pitched in for medical treatment, sponsoring repatriation journeys, giving free food and nutrition to providing legal input or even simply volunteering time to sit and talk to a terminally ill child!

Connecting together...



Connecting together

In order to discuss the role of helplines in building partnerships for child protection, CHILDLINE India Foundation organised an International Consultation on child helplines along with the Government of India in collaboration with ChildLine U.K., supported by Ashoka Innovators for the Public, British High Commission, International Forum for Child Welfare, Plan international, Save the Children, UK and UNICEF. Held between the 23rd-26th of August 2001 at Pune, India, the consultation was attended by 70 participants who shared their helpline models in responding to the needs of children. In exploring the role of

helplines in placing child rights on the world agenda, the participants at the consultation signed a Pune Declaration to take the commitment of making helplines a part of the mainstream agenda.

*Visit [www.internationalconsultation.inchq.com](http://www.internationalconsultation.inchq.com) for more information on the international consultation.*

Pune declaration for protecting children

Pune declaration for  
protecting children

23rd to 26th August 2001  
Pune, India.

Representatives from governments, NGOs, Academia and the corporate sector from 19 countries who met at the International Child Protection Helpline Consultation held at Pune, India from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> Aug., 2001, appeal to the UN Special Session on Children to support the following declaration:

- Governments should promote, support and strengthen child protection policies, programmes and monitoring systems in equal partnership with NGOs, the civil society, corporate sector, academia, children and the media.
- UNICEF in collaboration with child protection agencies should develop minimum global standards for child protection that will guide policy and programme development.
- Governments should invest more resources in communication and information technologies to provide maximum access to all children and child rights advocates for child protection.
- Governments should promote and support child protection helplines and child

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Pune declaration for  
protecting children

protection helpdesks at all levels – local, national, regional and global – that is accessible to all children 24 hours a day. The child protection helplines and helpdesks should link and strengthen all existing child protection programmes and mechanisms.

- UNICEF in collaboration with governments, helplines and other partners should establish a global internet portal for all children.
- Governments should promote greater media responsiveness to child protection access by children to the media.

- Governments should ratify and implement all international treaties and conventions concerning the protection and repatriation of children from cross-border trafficking.
- The UN Special Session on Children should declare August 26 of every year as the International Day of Child Protection Helplines.

*Countries Represented:*

*Argentina, Bangladesh, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Slovakia, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.*

To every child  
a childhood

To every child a childhood

The CHILDLINE India Foundation has experimented, learnt from mistakes and grown. We would like to share our experiences and urge other Governments to adopt the partnership model. We hope that countries adopt the spirit of the Pune declaration and use helplines as a strategy for reaching out to every child in need of care and protection.

Let us globally commit ourselves "...to every child a childhood."

*CHILDLINE India Foundation is a partnership between the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Government of India) and the voluntary sector, corporate sector, state governments, concerned citizens and children.*

Additional material on this initiative is available for your perusal. Contact :

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Someone who cares is a phone call away



सत्यमेव जयते

CHILDLINE is a partnership between the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (GOI), State governments, NGOs, the Corporate Sector, UNICEF and Concerned Individuals.

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