**Kasba Girls Home**

Project Overview

Kasba Girls Home was established in 2007, and since then the home has offered a safe, loving family environment to girls from 5 to 12 years old, who were orphaned, abandoned, at high risk or from unsafe families.

Project Background

In India, the education of girls is still underrated by parents of below poverty line families who prefer them to either earn money to support the family or take care of younger siblings and do all the household chores. Poverty, lack of parental care and consequent family disorganization are major factors responsible for widespread migration of these children to the city. Child marriage is still widespread in India, home to a third of the world’s child brides. Limited educational opportunities, reluctance of families to enrol and send girls to school and preparation for child marriage leads to an unskilled workforce and deprives these children of job opportunities to earn a better income and prevent them from entering the vicious cycle of exploitation, abuse and poverty.

A Situational Analysis was conducted by HOPE in July 2017 with 39 girls staying in Kasba Home revealed that;

* Girls staying with their single mothers had been left alone while their mothers had to go for work and were left uncared. These girls were often found begging on the streets. As a result, the girls were prone to being trafficked, abused or kidnapped.
* Girls were living on the streets and their parents were engaged in daily labour and rag picking. In the absence of their parents for long hours, the children would roam the streets making them prone to be trafficked, involved in car accidents, vulnerable to attacks etc.
* Unable to cook in the absence of their mothers, the children were begging on the streets for food and money. The fact that the girls did not have proper food and nutrition mean that they suffered from malnourishment and illness.
* Girls placed in Kasba Home had been victims of abuse and torture with 85% (33 out of 39) girls experienced physical abuse by their family members (including parents) and 38% (15 out of 39) girls had been physically abused by the local people in absence of their parents.

Project Activities and Achievements

Protection & Education

HOPE’s Protection Homes provide vulnerable children with a home away from home; a loving, caring and safe environment in which children can learn and grow into independent, successful and happy young adults. It has always been HOPE’s priority to restore children to their homes, where possible and appropriate, and we strive to develop families through strengthened interventions to improve the social and economic situation of a child’s home, before restoration. Where home environments do not exist or still pose a threat to children, the children remain in HOPE protection homes, afforded the opportunity to receive an education, healthcare, nutrition, protection and love and care to rebuild their once shattered childhoods.

Individual Care plans are prepared for each girl and all aspects of HOPE’s Child Protection Policy (developed in line with UNCRC) are maintained. The home ensures that the girls have access to formal education by enrolling them in local government schools and providing them with admission fees, uniforms, books etc. Remedial educational support is provided by our coaching centres, as well as tutoring and homework support within the home.

Restoration of children

The girls’ family members are assessed to unearth the root causes of their poverty, where needs and gaps are identified to meet their basic entitlements to services and rights. Family members are made aware of the importance of child rights and child protection and their responsibilities towards their children, livelihood options and employment generation schemes of the government. The home encourages relatives to visit the children regularly to promote a sense of stability, where appropriate and viable; HOPE social workers also accompany the girls on regular visits to their extended families. Girls who are in hostels or boarding school are regularly visited by the house parent and counsellors to check on their progress.

To promote sustainability, we also conduct awareness campaigns in the community on child protection issues to improve the community’s capacity to look after vulnerable children. We continually network with organisations working in this area to promote knowledge sharing and best practice.

Healthcare and Nutrition

Our goal is to ensure that the girls remain healthy. The girls receive a healthy nutritious diet. The home regularly checks the health of the girls and makes sure that they receive necessary medical treatment. The girls are educated about the importance of cleanliness, personal hygiene and staying healthy. Many of these girls have been traumatised by their lives on the streets before entering Kasba Home and receive counselling both individually and as part of a group. Counselling is also provided to family members where appropriate.

Recreation & Extra Curricular Activities

HOPE staff also work to develop the creativity and talent of the girls through extra-curricular activities including sports, art, music, and karate. The girls are given opportunities to participate in various sporting and educational competitions. The girls take part in our Health & Development Through Sports Programme, giving them the opportunity to undertake high-level sports training from some of Kolkata’s sports clubs and also receive further information on a career in the sports and health industry and nutritious diets. HOPE strive to give them the opportunity to regain their lost childhoods and take them on outings and excursions, enrol them in art and dance exhibitions and offer them every opportunity to develop their social skills and interests through a wide range of extracurricular activities.

Individual Case Management

The needs of the girl and her family are identified through assessment and parents are involved to develop a Care Plan for each girl to ensure that need based child friendly and holistic support is provided. The core elements of Case Management include assessment, case planning, implementation, monitoring and review.

Operation of Committees in Protection Home

To ensure a safe and child friendly environment in Kasba Home, a Safe Guarding Committee, Children’s Committee and Home Management Committees intervene to enact Child Protection Policy to improve safety and security measures in home, improve conditions in the Home and review the standards through assessment, developing educational, vocational and recreation plans for children.

Case Study

Before Preshti (named changed) was born her mother came to India from Bangladesh to find work as a domestic helper, however she was sold into the sex trade by a neighbour. Preshti’s father met her mother while collecting money as a money lender. Preshti’s mother left the sex trade to get married to him and lived in a small town and had two children, Preshti and Arju. After 10 years, the marriage ended and Preshti’s mother left her family. Preshti’s father remarried and her mother began living with a partner in a red-light area in Kolkata, working in the sex trade. The area was raided by the police and her mother was taken into police custody. Preshti and Arju were placed in HOPE’s Female Crisis Intervention Centre while their case was reviewed by Kolkata’s Child Welfare Committee, which eventually placed both children under HOPE’s care.

After being released from prison, Preshti’s mother went back to Bangladesh. Two years later she returned to India and stayed in Asansol with another partner but didn’t come to meet her children. In the last few years she moved back to Kolkata and has sought to contact her children again. Preshti meets with her mother under the care and supervision of HOPE staff in Kasba Girls Home but the Child Welfare Committee have deemed that she is still not allowed to be alone with her children for safety reasons.

After coming to Kasba Home, Preshti went through a series of changes in terms of her health and hygiene practices and has been supported with nutritious and healthy food from the first day. It took some time for her to get accustomed to the home and gradually with the warmth and care provided by our staff, she began to bond with the other girls and staff. Preshti was enrolled in Saraswati Vidyabhawan School (Government School) near the protection home and is a bright child.

Preshti is now 14 years old and is studying in Vidyapith School for Girls. She is very passionate about crafts, painting, singing and dancing. She attends taekwondo, drawing, singing and dancing classes on a weekly basis in Kasba Home and performs with Udaan band. In the future she wants to be a Fashion Designer. Her mother is now visiting her regularly and is receiving counselling and support from HOPE’s social workers to receive a better job and be more actively engaged in her daughter’s life.