

About Praajak

The word Praajak means charioteer, the one who guides and mentors. Praajak began their journey in 1997 with a commitment to securing a better present and future for children and youth living in historically disadvantaged communities, in confined custodial milieus and those who find themselves surviving on their own. They work collectively with children and youth, the communities they live in, government and non- government actors to create a caring and protective environment for them. Drawing from the rights-based approach, the organisation support vulnerable children and youth in utilising their potential and agency.

The issues that the organisation has been focusing on over the past one year are child protection issues that include unsafe migration, child trafficking, child sexual abuse, early/child and forced marriages and child work and labour. Praajak has consistently engaged with and challenged traditional notions of masculinity and patriarchy which have led to a growing body of work with boys and young men and supporting them in playing their part in creating a gender equitable society.

The current reporting period April 2018 to March 2019 also saw projects on using Sports as a tool to break gender stereotypes and facilitating empowerment of young women and girls. Embarking on a programme aimed at Diversion and Restorative Justice for children in conflict with law (CCL) has been an interesting chapter in the organisation's onward journey.

During the period between April 2018 to March 2019, the organisation focussed on consolidating its work and vision for the future towards a model encompassing three main elements- *building collectives, strengthening community ecosystems and developing mental health support services* in the communities. Collectivisation of young people and creating safe spaces (Muktangan centres) in the community remained a major programming strategy. Additionally, systems strengthening and developing a network of young leaders in communities or institutions to actively engage with communities has begun and will remain a strong strategy in the future. Additionally, supporting new initiatives led by young people, promoting well-being and agency of children, adolescent and youth remains a benchmark for future programming.

Directors' Note

As you read Praajak's Annual Report 2018-19, I hope you will be able to learn more about what makes the organisation an important player at the intersection of child rights and gender equity.

Over the last 21 years we have earned the trust and respect of our stakeholders. We have welcomed challenges and have tried out innovative ideas with the help of our donors and mentors. One of our critical strengths has been our committed and skilled staff and consultants and our Board members who are experts in their fields. They bring a strong service ethos to everything they do combining it with passion, conviction and experience.

We believe we have made a positive difference in the lives of the children and young people we work with and their families and communities. Stories of transformation and change continue to inspire and motivate us to give our best. The programmes we support are critical to keeping the communities safe from gender-based discrimination and violence, as well as making government services more efficient.

Over the last two decades we have slowly expanded to different areas of West Bengal and worked with other organisations at the regional and national level. We have worked in many of the most demanding and trying environments. However this has given us confidence and we have jointly built an accumulated knowledge base which we now share with other civil society organisations and the government.

We try to live out our values of equity, democracy, plurality, trust, care, transparency, accountability and innovation.

I really hope and look forward to having you as our partner on our journey to achieve our vision of a gender equitable and just society.

Deep Purkayastha

Director

Antariksha

The programme titled “Antariksha” (space in between) is a unique multi-faceted programme that aims to address gender equity and promote a gender discrimination free society. The programme works with children and adolescents in South and North 24 Parganas, Murshidabad, Malda and Jalpaiguri in West Bengal to prevent early and child marriage, trafficking, sexual abuse and school drop-outs.

It has three components-

- Enhancing capacities of boys and girls aged 12 to 21 years on issues of gender and sexuality through a series of sessions(Study Circles) and breaking gender stereotypes through Sports like Kabaddi for girls and young women
- Facilitating *Collectives* of young people to drive change in their families and communities
- Supporting women and youth groups to access educational opportunities and mental health services
- Enhancing linkages with relevant government schemes and entitlements and other social supports for transgender youth, single children and adolescents, single women and vulnerable families.

The programme focuses on communities becoming allies for building children’s agency and reject models of toxic masculinity. The actions taken within the community are implemented with the aim to demonstrate that behaviour change can be sustained when children and youth drive change with the support of their communities. The programme works both with boys and girls to empower them against the deep-rooted patriarchal system to ensure their rights.

Praajak’s initiation of forming Collectives of young girls and women playing Kabaddi in Beldanga, Murshidabad, Dumdum, North 24 Parganas districts showed encouraging results of changing community practices and perspectives around gender roles. The Women’s Kabaddi League was held in April 2019 in both the places which was organised and participated by members of the Collectives - was one of the biggest success. 150 collective members from the community where they are located participated in the league which was played within public spaces within their own communities.

The programme has been an affirmation of Praajak’s belief in the power of Sports as one of the tools to empower and amplify women’s voices and tear down gender barriers and discrimination. Playing Kabaddi along with development of life skills and gender sensitisation activities has helped to improve self-efficacy of girls and women and contribute to the development of leadership skills. These enable girls and young women to make better life choices where the probability of abuse and exploitation can be reduced or eliminated. Praajak thus facilitates creating enabling factors to empower girls’, develop their agency and ability to negotiate with their families and communities to delay their age of marriage, age of childbirth and other such issues.

The girls playing Kabaddi are being helped by trained Animators who act as their mentors and coaches. The Animators ensure that the girls do not drop-out of schools, receive effective counselling and psychosocial support for their emotional wellbeing and access vocational skills and placement/business opportunities.

The programme has extended to targeted migrant communities in Berhampore, Malda and Siliguri since February 2019. The communities selected are migrants from rural and impoverished hinterlands, tribal belts and the closed tea gardens of West Bengal and from neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Bihar. They settle beside railway tracks in shanties and mostly earn their livelihood through begging, collecting bottles or rag picking. The adolescent girls from such families are especially vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and early marriage.



Significant Outcomes

Kabaddi league matches are being played in fields belonging to local mosques with final matches being attended by more than 1000 people including male family members of the participants

The teams formed in Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, Malda and Siliguri contain participants from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds such as Adivasis, Dalits and Muslims

156 women participated in the Block and Ward level Kabaddi League matches for women in Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas

3 Kabaddi groups have been formed in Malda and Siliguri since February 2019 where gender-based study circles are ongoing with 192 girls and 62 boys

Significant Outcomes

- Weekly “*Study Circles*” on Gender were conducted with 140 boys and 76 girls
 - There are cases where boys are challenging the gender norms in their families after attending the weekly study circles
 - The Chairman-in -Council, Education from Beldanga Municipality (North 24 Parganas) approached Praajak to extend its gender and sexuality workshops with adolescents in 28 schools within the Municipal area
 - LGBTQ members have been encouraged in joining the collectives offering them a safe space to discuss sexuality and sexual citizenship
 - This programme is initiating a number of community-level actions led by young people and women such as presentation of drama, arts exhibition on gender-based violence; district-level gender *mela* (fair) and rally with 350 women in Murshidabad. Yuva Aarohan (annual meeting) of 220 adolescents and youth was held to discuss gender issues through panel discussions, group work and others in September 2018
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The increased participation of community and families in these events shows that families and communities are gradually opening up to the empowerment of girls and women and accepting them in non-stereotypical roles. Community receptiveness is also evident from the access given to the public and government spaces (Anganwadi centres, school grounds, mosques, panchayat office) for holding study circles and the Kabaddi matches.

Case Story

Sima (name changed), is a 14-year-old girl who lives in Jogonnath Colony, Malda, where she was forced to work as non-residence domestic worker in surrounding households. She hardly has time to read or study, socialise with friends. There are six members in her family, her mother, stepfather and siblings. Her biological father died 5-6 years before after which her mother remarried and moved with her new husband. When Praajak reached out to Sima, she mentioned her life becoming miserable since that move. Praajak was initiating kabaddi teams for girls in the locality and used assessment tools and counselling methods to understand Sima's situation.

There were many hurdles. Her stepfather was not earning but Sima did not want sympathy from her community. She values her family's dignity more than anything. As the project team talked through Sima's situation with her, going through her internal-external barriers, and looking at opportunities and support systems, Sima began to understand and identify goals for her life and ways to overcome obstacles.

After the intervention from Praajak, Sima made the independent decision to only work in one home so that she could continue attending school regularly. She informed her family about this decision. Presently she saves from her salary and spends for her education and contributes the rest to her family.

Sima is now a part of the afternoon Kabaddi sessions and has expressed interest to attend the study-circles (weekly sessions on gender and life skills). Praajak team has been sensitive towards her time commitments due to her working status. They have observed that after taking part in the Kabaddi sessions Sima has become more friendly and outspoken. Sima was quoted saying *"I now have the guts to study, attend school regularly and to do whatever I would like to do"*.



Case Story

Raju (name changed) was part of Praajak's study circles on gender and life skills. He was in class X. He had completed the 13-week sessions on gender equality. His sister was in Class XI when their parents decided to get her married. Due to his engagement with the programme and attending study circles, Raju was more sensitive towards the emotions and feelings of his mother and sister. He developed a friendly relationship with his sister for the first time and got to know that his sister did not want to get married. Raju was successful in convincing his parents and his sister could continue with her studies. While convincing his parents, he had mentioned that he would not continue his studies if his sister was not supported to do so.

Presently, Raju is studying in class IX and is a regular member of the Collective, while his sister is studying in her 2nd year in College.

Muktadhara – “care, protection and rehabilitation of children in street situation”

The programme titled Muktadhara (free flowing) focuses on reducing vulnerabilities and violence in the lives of children of 6 to 18 years of age living in street or slum situation from three municipal wards of Dumdum, near Kolkata. By reducing vulnerabilities, the programme seeks to create a safer environment for the children in street or slum situations – focusing on physical environment, health and hygiene (hygiene and cleanliness, water sanitation), school and family environment. One of the strategies applied to accomplish the above objective is networking and convergence with other stakeholders and community spaces.

The programme approaches the rehabilitation of children in street or slum situation through applying an integrated framework while upholding the agency of the child. The programme works on various aspects of development of children – physical and mental while facilitating/enabling violence-free social structures and environments around them. The programme finally seeks to build “child friendly model wards” in the targeted municipalities.

The programme addresses violence from the perspective of children through participatory processes. One of the ways are mapping of safe and unsafe spaces undertaken with children and youth in the three targeted wards. Sharing the outcome of the mapping exercise with the community and form a do-able action plan to address these issues is then done through convergence with respective duty bearers. The organisation thus works within the entire ecosystem of a child such as family, school, ward councillors, health centres and other government structures and duty bearers. The programme targets to have 352 sessions to be undertaken in the year on violence and abuse with children/adolescents and parents



Significant outcomes from the programme

- During this reporting period, a total of 406 (262 girls and 144 boys) children were reached out through this programme
- Working with schools to make schooling interesting through co-curricular activities (Library programme, painting competition, issue-based debate child parliament, suggestion box)
- Training and activation the Ward level Child Protection Committees (WLCPC)in Ward No 3
- Enrolment of 27 children into schools. These children had dropped off as they found now interest in studies. In some cases, the parents were unable to find time to get them admitted as either both were daily labourers. In some cases parents were alcoholic and did not think their child’s education was important.

- Networking and convergence with various departments/ govt. projects like – ICDS, SSM, Department of Women and Child, Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Environment, Department of Technical Education, and Training, Police and related departments of the Municipality.

Case Story

Rupa Adhikari, (name changed) aged 17 years is from Promodnagar, Dumdum municipality, West Bengal. She married against her parents' wish and lost all connections with her biological family. She faced domestic violence at her in-laws and practically had no place to look for support. When she finally decided to come out of her abusive situation, she contacted Praajak. Praajak with the help of Dumdum Police station contacted her biological family, counselled them to accept Rupa back. Rupa was able to go back to her family and also get back to education. Rupa is now capable of handling queries from neighbours about her marital status, plans of re-marriage and the discrimination that she faces. She receives complete support from her family in her continuing her studies.



Muktangan– “An open courtyard for Children”

The programme titled Muktangan (open courtyard) focuses on creating safety nets for protection of children and youth (especially migrant/migrating) within local communities near railway stations or children who are in contact with the railways. The objectives of the programmes revolves around

- Access to education for children

Working on systemic strengthening is a major focus and success area in the Programme. Thus, Praajak works on activating structures important for ensuring rights and protection of children in schools (school management committees) and community (block, ward and village level child protection committees). The programme not only concentrates on the destination points i.e. the railways but also intervenes in the source areas i.e. areas from where the children or families are coming in contact with the railways. Thus, a strong outreach along with multifaceted actions and stakeholder engagement are the key strategies to keep children and young people protected with access to education and livelihoods.

- Access to sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities for young people
- Access to livelihood opportunities for economically vulnerable families with children.

Currently the programme is operational in Kharagpur (Pashchim Mednipur) , Malda (Malda district) and Asansol (Pashchim Bardhaman district) and New Jalpaiguri (Jalpaiguri district).The services provided to the children and young people and their family are diverse, like functional literacy classes, psychosocial support (PSS), mobile libraries, linkages with Government welfare schemes, vocational training and alternative housing for adolescents and youth and activation of Village level or Ward Level Child Protection Committees (VLCPC/WLCPC).

Significant outcomes from the programme

- 3129 number of children have been reached out through 4 Mukhtangan Centres
- 17 school management committees (SMCs) within the 3 targeted areas were activated and strengthened. With functioning of the SMCs and active participation of parents, a total of 2700 children are being benefitted through quality education in these 17 schools
- 900 students are benefitting from improved and innovative teaching techniques in 9 schools. 61 teachers from these schools have been trained
- Families of 200 children are benefitting through linkages to alternative livelihoods opportunities
- 389 boys & 445 girls were linked with formal education through enrolment in schools and open schooling
- 99 children (66 boys and 30 girls) were reunited with their families majority belonging to Paschim Bardhaman district
- 4 male & 36 female youths are engaged in job or small business after being trained in mobile repairing, soft toy making, computer hardware repairing facilitated through this programme
- 614 families linked with different government schemes like Food Security Scheme, Janani Sishu Suraksha Yojna, Swastha Bima Yojna, Sabuj Sathi, Pradhan Mantri Jon Dhan Yojna and application for documents such as Aadhar Card
- Praajak collaborated with different private and public institutes for providing alternative livelihoods trainings to 87 families such as jewellery making, jute product making and others. 12 families were also linked with primary teacher's training under National Urban Livelihood Mission in Asansol

Case Story

SK. Ajmer (name changed), 6 years old child came in contact with Praajak in mid-September 2017 at Kharagpur. He lived with his grandmother and elder brother of 13 years. His grandmother makes paper bags (thonga) for livelihood. She gets Rs.5/- per Kg on selling them. Ajmer's father is a rickshaw puller but he spends his income on alcohol and gambling. His mother passed away at the time of his birth. Ajmer's mother expired during the time of his birth.

On his contact with Praajak, we tried to understand his vulnerabilities through Vulnerability Assessment Tools. It was revealed that Ajmer worked in shops from where he received either money or food. It seemed that Ajmer had no choice but to work to sustain his family.

Praajak contacted the Labour Commissioner of Kharagpur division and shared Ajmer's story. The Commissioner recommended him for sponsorship under ICPS scheme. Members of Praajak submitted all relevant documents including home verification report to the District Child Protection Society, Paschim Midnapore. Meanwhile Ajmer was enrolled into Lohaniya Primary School. Praajak continued follow up and advocacy with DCPS and Ajmer received his first sponsorship amount on 18th May, 2018 which will help him to sustain his education without having to work elsewhere.

The various services provided and linkages to the Government schemes will ensure long term benefits for children and their families. The programme has been consolidating its work in the source areas (places from where children coming to the stations) and intensified outreach in the communities surrounding the railway stations. This was a strategic decision as more children who were seen accessing the railways stations were residing in nearby areas/shanties and slums. Thus, community -based intervention has been a priority over the last couple of years along with direct interventions on the railway stations.



Diversion Programme – “Restorative Justice Approach”

The programme is an approach in identifying and managing cases of children in conflict with law “without resorting to formal trial,” where it so warrants. It is an approach to justice that personalizes the crime by having the victims and the offenders mediate a restitution agreement to the satisfaction of each, as well as involving the community. It is based on a theory of justice that considers crime and wrong doing to be an offense against an individual or community, rather than the State.

The programme envisages implementation of the spirit and tenets of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2015 with regard to diversion and measures for dealing with children in conflict with law without resorting to judicial proceedings unless it is in the best interest of the child or the society as a whole. This programme is unique to firstly, employ “positive measures” of mobilizing resources of those of family and community, for promoting the well-being, providing an inclusive and enabling environment to reduce vulnerabilities of children secondly, to support structures like Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB) to follow the “Principle of Diversion” and build capacities of concerned stakeholders.

Praajak’s programme aims for effective inter-agency cooperation and collaboration between the JJB, the Police, Child Care Institutions(CCI), District Child Protection Units (DCPU), Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and others with a special focus on South 24 Parganas. Through handholding support and trainings the programme will help to create ‘Restorative Circles’ with the stakeholders, promoting a Case Management approach to address the socio-psychological needs of children and link them to various appropriate services.

Additionally, 6 communities are being mobilised through Collectives of vulnerable youth between the age of 12 and 18 years for eliminating the need for intervention under the Juvenile Justice Act. Praajak will directly work in communities and also Madrasas on gender and masculinity issues to address offending behaviour and substance abuse among vulnerable youth. Thus, it addresses issues

of toxic masculinity which are masculine forms of behaviour imbibed by boys from existing social values and is seen to be one of the root causes of offending behaviour.

The programme will finally culminate into developing guidelines on Case Management in accordance with the requirements of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection Children) Act, 2015 and the Rules

Significant Outcomes from the Programme

- 3 cases of CCL were dealt with where children were placed within their extended family instead of being institutionalised in Observation Homes
 - 27 youths (17 boys & 10 girls) under Diamond Harbour Police District have been reached through community mobilisation
 - 6 schools have been reached out to for addressing issues of vulnerabilities linked to offending behaviours of children
 - Workshop has been conducted with boys at Dhruvashram Observation Home to identify influencing factors within communities that force children to get involved in crime. The findings (peer pressure, lack of parental guidance, social media/current trends influence) gave the Team insights on triggering factors and thus formulate their programmatic actions accordingly
 - Mapping of case management approaches is ongoing within targeted CCIs to help develop a module for capacity building on Case Management with concerned actors like counsellors within the CCIs
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thereof in a participative way with concerned stakeholders.

Case Story

Raju (name changed) is accused in a murder of a politically influential person living in his locality. He was detained at Dhruvashram Observation Home from 2017 after apprehension by police. On reaching out to the child, Praajak arranged for counselling sessions to prepare him on his life after release. Raju expressed his desire to learn automobile repairing and driving. Praajak with the order from JJB visited his relatives where Raju could be restored. Meanwhile, Raju was violently beaten up by other boys in the Observation Home which prompted the decision of Principle Magistrate to handover Raju to his relative for safe custody. The Principle Magistrate also ordered that Raju be escorted during his visits to JJB as he was under threat from the family which he had harmed. Praajak is in regular contact with Raju and his family. He is also attending counselling sessions facilitated by Praajak. Raju is presently working in a sweet shop with his grandparent and seems to be enjoying the work.

Promoting Safe Migration among young women

Praajak is working to ensure empowerment of young women towards making safe migration choices in South 24 Parganas district. Through formation of collectives in 11-gram sansads (villages) the programme is creating safe spaces for dialogue and sharing amongst young people. The programme is developing a peer led approach through which youth who are at an advanced level in the program, actively engage with the community or institutional network to develop, and lead new projects and initiatives based on the Praajak Model. The meetings of the collectives become 'safe spaces' for the young people to open up about their experiences of abuse including sexual abuse and also give them the confidence to share with their families. Apart from raising their voice within their families, the Collective members inform women from the community on entitlements and prepare IEC materials on social issues.

Part of Praajaak's roadmap for the future has been developing community driven ecosystems for supporting children and youth and building their agency. The programme thus aims at building collectives and strengthening the community ecosystem for ensuring protection and safe migration through working with structures like village level child protection committees (VLCPCs). Thus, develop a network of local leaders in communities or institutions who actively engage with youth collectives and support new initiatives led by young people.

Praajak has been building capacities of members of VLCPC through an intensive hand holding support such as identification of issues within their jurisdiction, sharing information on new welfare programme of Government of West Bengal such as Manabik Prokalpa. The VLCPCs are also being linked with other community-level structures like self-help groups (SHGs). Strategies such as family strengthening and counselling members of vulnerable families are carried out through home visits and assessment of vulnerabilities of families. Through this programme, Praajak is also facilitating the inclusion of children as members in the VLCPCs as mandated under guidelines of CPCs thus ensuring meaningful participation of children in Government spaces.



Significant Achievements from the Programme

- Social mapping to identify vulnerable families and children done through active participation of VLCPC members and other people of the community
 - A total of 177 collective members (67 boys & 110 girls) were reached during the reporting period
 - Formation of 11 Village Level Child Protection Committees was facilitated by Praajak in collaboration with Urel Chaandpur Gram Panchayat. The VLCPCs now function in accordance with the minimum standard set in the West Bengal VLCPC guidelines
 - Collective members are identifying cases of child marriage, child sexual abuse, drop out and trafficking and informing to VLCPC for response and actions
 - VLCPCs are proactively supporting actions with members of Collectives and taking actions jointly to reduce child protection issues
 - A total 7 cases have been dealt by the VLCPCs and Collective members including cases involving trafficking and sexual abuse
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Case Story

Priyanka (name changed), 14 years old lives in the Atasura GP with her impoverished family. Her family did not have the means for supporting Priyanka's education. Her father was an alcoholic and used to beat Priyanka's mother when drunk. Her father started looking for grooms for getting Priyanka married as soon as possible. However, Priyanka was turned down by many prospective grooms as she was not considered good looking by families of prospective grooms. Priyanka also received taunts from her mother. Thus she developed a low self esteem. Priyanka shared her plight with her friends Shibani and Baishakhi (name changed) who were both members of Collectives set up and facilitated by Praajak to act as peer support groups in the community. Realizing the family pressure that Priyanka was facing, members of the Collective decided to visit Priyanka's family to counsel them about the harmful consequences of early marriage, citing real life cases from the community. They also told the parents about the legal implications and police actions on cases of early marriage.

With the support of the Collective and Praajak, Priyanka was able to stall her marriage and is presently a feisty collective member herself participating in weekly study circle (sessions on gender and life skills). Recently she was instrumental in getting a trafficker arrested in Dakshin Barasat , South 24 Parganas district. She is currently studying in class twelve and enjoys an improved relationship with her parents.

CHILDLINE – Malda

Praajak is collaborating with CHILDLINE India in Malda Railway Station (Malda district). Apart from the main railway station of Malda, outreach activities are being conducted in 9 other stations (like Gour Malda , Harishchandrapur, Malda Court Station, Khaltipur) under this programme such as . The programme targets to create awareness on child protection issues and safety of children in contact with the railways with passengers, vendors/shop keepers, railway staffs, cleaners, railway police force (RPF),government railway police (GRP), train ticket examiner (TTE), rickshaw, totos and taxi drivers. The team is also working with 16 schools, 12 slum areas, 6 Anganwadi centres, religious places and areas of worship and 1 child care institution (CCI).

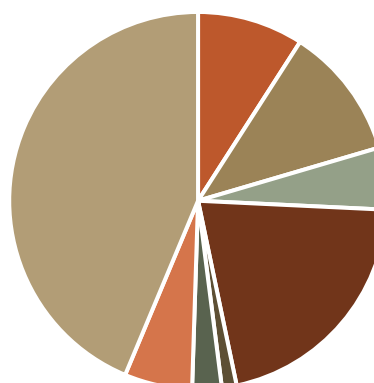
The objective of the programme is to spread awareness of CHILDLINE (1098 number) and its services for children in need of aid and assistance. Praajak also conducts trainings of concerned stakeholders

such as RPF, GRP on issues of child protection and legal implications. In collaboration with the agencies working in the stations, the Praajak Team identifies vulnerable children living or coming to the stations. The stakeholders then work with the child welfare committee (CWC) of Malda for effective restoration or reintegration where appropriate concerning those children.

Significant achievements

- 377 children have been reached out through services of CHILDLINE from April 2018 to March 2019
- Orientation programme conducted with 128 stakeholders connected to railway stations on child protection issues
- Awareness and Open House programmes were organised focussing on building awareness of parents about child rights, purpose of CHILDLINE and its activities, and on issues of education, child marriage and child labour. Such programmes were organised at the different community fairs, puja programmes and youth club pujas.

Reasons for children in contact with CHILDLINE



- Attraction to city life
- Support for education
- Beatings from parents, siblings
- For educational and nutritional support
- Neglect at Home
- Medical Help
- Missing/ Missing while traveling
- Others (dislike for school/ Madrasah, not prepared for exam, meeting friend, lost, boarding wrong train etc)

Case Story

Ermen's (name changed) is from a tribal family. Her mother worked in a tea garden along with two of her brothers and her father was a daily labourer. Ermen never went to school. The family was in a poor economic situation where they did not have regular income throughout the year. Their condition was worsened by the fact that her father was alcoholic. In this situation, Ermen's maternal uncle handed her over to a woman who would take her to the city to work in a household. A passenger of the train in which Ermen was travelling with the woman got suspicious and called CHILDLINE. The Praajak team of Railway CHILDLINE along with GRP rescued Ermen and another girl, arrested the woman from Malda station. After her rescue, Ermen was taken to shelter home with the verbal order from CWC. An FIR was lodged against the trafficker by Railway CHILDLINE and she was arrested. Within next few days CWC conducted the Investigation Report of the child and handed the child to their parents. Ermen is presently staying with her family.



Way Forward

Praajak as an organisation looks forward to create a culture, behaviour and practise of gender inclusion and gender safety within communities it works. The issues that remain central to all programmes being implemented by Praajak are that of gender, masculinity, mental health & well being of children, adolescents and youth along with facilitating processes to build their agencies. Youth-led change within communities towards gender equity and enabling ecosystems will be the main drivers for Praajak. Praajak will, through all its programmes, continue to create free, joyful spaces for mental wellbeing, critical thinking, dialogue, collectivization and building the agency of youth and children. The organisation has strategically made changes in its programming to suit the evolving needs of communities and its main constituency i.e children and youth. Findings and learning from field experiences have helped the organisation in prioritising target areas and stakeholders – such as shifting from a solely railway station intervention to a wider community-level work as an example of such a change. In the coming days, Praajak aims to position itself as a resource organization for the sector as one of the expert organisations working with boys and adolescents and a hub for innovations from its work.

Praajak also intends to embark working on a new programme to promote *Diversion and Restorative Justice*, possibly in South 24 Parganas involving a range of relevant stakeholders. This is in response to the increase in 25% in child offending according to NCRB data of 2016 over the previous year. 75% of these children are adolescent boys in Bengal. The 10,581 cases pending in JJBs (SCPS data as on 2017) poses additional risk of recidivism. Hence, Praajak in the coming time will work with young boys to address school drop-outs and offending behaviour with focus on gender norms and masculinity to promote justice for children through alternative care models like diversion and restorative justice. This is a new concept to the state with no practice so far. Diversion is an effective method to prevent recidivism. It prevents children from coming in contact with the JJ system. On the other hand Restorative Justice (RJ) encourages victims and offenders to mediate restitution to the satisfaction of each, involving the community. In addition preventive work with boys in communities prone to offending can support both diversion and RJ approaches. Both high offending and drop-out rates are related to prevalent ideals of masculinity, in which boys are socialised. This often leads to toxic effects for both boys and the community. Additionally Praajak would explore issues around boys dropping out from school and strategies to counter that.

Simultaneously, Praajak plans to organise an Annual Kabaddi League for Girls in collaboration with the state branch of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI).