

The calls come late in the night.

"Didi, can you come? Sonu was beaten. He is bleeding very badly."

"Didi, can you help?"

There is a baby lying under a seat in the train."





Tarun Chhabra

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Going forward with CHILDLINE

We would like to thank Dr Armaity Desai for suggesting the idea of this interim publication. Tarun Chhabra for sharing his journey as a photographer and allowing us to use his work. Anjila Puri and the Fisheye Design team for making this book so special. Jerry Pinto for his editorial contributions and for being a friend of CHILDLINE. Nanni Singh of YouthReach for giving us creative thinking time. Sam Hollenshead and Amir Rizvi for capturing the spirit of street children in their pictures. Kalpana Kaul for her professionalism and editorial rigour.

Directors of CHILDLINE partner organizations and officials of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E) for their unstinted support. They agreed to long interviews and juggled through packed schedules to make time for us.

Samir, Rafiq, Mohammad Salim, Bunty and Vipin Kumar Savita—CHILDLINE volunteers and team members—for reliving their journeys with us and for allowing us to tell their stories to a larger world. They bring to this book the spirit that has driven CHILDLINE in 10 years. While we haven't shared the stories of all the boys in this publication, their observations resonate in many parts of this volume.

CIF team members, especially Chitrakala Acharya, Inu Anne Stephen, Denis Joseph, Shilpa Ahluwalia, Deepika Mahajan, Sandeep Kumar Mitra, Gargi Saha, Nishit Kumar and Nandlal for supporting us with information, statistics, graphics, photographs and their own 1098 stories.

Anupama Singh for being the most effective volunteer with whom we have ever worked. Kajol Menon for her energy and for guiding us through our many moments of indecision. Jeroo Billimoria for sharing her CHILDLINE journey in long interviews stolen between meetings and rides to the Mumbai airport.

And for giving us the 1098 story in the first place.

Manisha Gupta, Nicole Menezes

1098 is owned in various ways
by all who associate with it.
Each group has added to its
shape and character.
Every day hundreds of
thousands of children tweak
around its features to make it
truly sadakchaap.



1098... a retrospective

Some years ago when I joined CHILDLINE, my perspective was that this was a good, essential service that needed to reach more children. Today, that basic outline in my mind hasn't changed much, but I am certainly overwhelmed by the new learnings that have emerged in the process of writing 1098 – the story of 10 years of CHILDLINE.

When this book was commissioned to my colleague, Nicole Menezes, the feisty veteran CHILDLINER who has been with us since 1999, and Manisha Gupta, who has been a dear friend of CHILDLINE since the time of its inception, it had not occurred to me that this publication would open up so many new layers and insights.

During their research for the book, the authors uncovered many stories of individuals and groups who shaped CHILDLINE. These are stories that we had lost or not fully known, stories that were not part of our institutional memory till 6 months back. While some have been shared with you in this book, the others will come to you in a more detailed publication, later this year.

Nicole and Manisha undertook a six-month long process of talking to children, directors of CHILDLINE partner organizations, government officials & other stake-holders. The interviews captured their voices, spirit, complaints and ownership to 1098.

With all the voices coming together in this publication, what emerges is that CHILDLINE 1098 is not just a service delivered in a unique model. It is an entity in its own right. It has developed a life and energy that is independent of partners, CIF and the government. 1098 is owned in various ways by all who associate with it. Each group has added to its shape and character. Every day hundreds of thousands of children tweak around its features to make it truly sadakchaap.

Nicole's passion for asserting the rights of marginalized children and Manisha's intense search for the truth, have combined to bring to the table the rich texture of children's perspective. I am deeply moved by the fact that millions of children have adopted CHILDLINE 1098 as their very own, a sort of private line to some anchor in a bewilderingly-changing world.

I would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation of so many Directors of our partner organizations and hundreds of CHILDLINE friends, without whom it would not have been possible for us to bring this publication out. To all of them, a heartfelt thank you.

Finally, this book is dedicated to children, for being our reason for existence, for giving us energy every day, and to all the young people who travel with CHILDLINE. They've made the CHILDLINE story possible.

To all of you who begin to read this publication, I have only this to say: Your call can change a life.

Thank you,

Kajol Menon
Executive Director

CHILDLINE India Foundation
Mumbai
May 2006



Tarun Chhabra



Tarun Chhabra

Ten...Nine...Eight!

The calls would come late
in the night.

"Didi, can you come?
There's been a fight at the station."

"Didi, can you help?
The police have battered Raju."

And Jeroo Billimoria would get up,
pull on work clothes and rush out to
where a street child was waiting.
On one of those dashes across the
sleeping city of Mumbai,
an idea was born.

What street children in Mumbai needed
was a helpline, their own helpline.

In 1996, Mumbai launched CHILDLINE, the country's first toll-free tele-helpline for street children in distress. It has responded to 2575081 calls from children who live and work in Mumbai, and has grown into a national child protection service that operates in 70 cities. In 10 years, CHILDLINE has received 9.6 million calls and worked with 3 million children in need of care and protection.

The beginnings were ordinary.

In 1989, Jeroo Billimoria, the founder of CHILDLINE, returned from the United States after completing a Masters Programme in Non-Profit Management. During her work with homeless men in New York City, at the Coalition for the Homeless, she had seen first-hand the sheer grit required for street survival. Years earlier, as a young volunteer with non-profits, she had been struck by the same resilience among Mumbai's street children.

Jeroo remembers being fired up, always, by anything sadakchaap – street savvy. She describes it as, "that street skill of survival and out-of-the-box resourcefulness."



Ruhani Kaur

In the early days, the children were defensive, even aggressive, with her. They called, all right. But many things didn't add up in their heads. Why was she rushing around helping them? What were her motives, really?

They treated her with a cynicism that comes when you've been let down by adults, again and again. They put her through many tests. Jeroo had to engage, listen, laugh off fake help calls, explain, argue, shout, fight, before they accepted her as an 'insider'.

And then the demands started rolling.

"We know there are people doing things for children but don't know where to go."

"You people get large salaries for working with children like us. Why does no money reach us?"

"We want you to help us when we need you, not when it's convenient for you to reach us."

"Each call was a validation of my work with them," Jeroo says. "It meant that they trusted me to do something."

But what could she do? She could not answer every call for help, or do everything for the thousands of street children who call Mumbai home. A tele-helpline could.

Jeroo was then a faculty member at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). She was also running MelJol, a community-based school programme whose mission was building citizenship among children. She approached Dr Armaity Desai, her mentor, and who was then the Director of TISS. She asked if TISS could incubate a tele-helpline for street children.

TISS came on board.

But Dr Desai laid down clear boundary lines.

"No new buildings or institutions."

"A new methodology would have to be evolved to work with resources that already existed."



Ruhani Kaur

Jeroo Billimoria with Manohar Das at a CHILDLINE Outreach.

"And for sure no phones would ring inside TISS." Dr Desai pushed Jeroo to bring fresh imagination into building a helpline service.

Jeroo had analysed Western helpline models during her time in the United States and her travels across Europe. She realized that a traditional 'helpline' (one that informs and counsels) was not enough for street children in India.

What was needed first was an access line – a one-point contact that would quickly connect children to concrete, real-time services that they need during or after a crisis.

Once the urgent emergency services were provided, the helpline would counsel the child further and ask if she needed more support. It would open up an array of long-term rehabilitation services for her to avail.

If the child said thank you, but no more intervention, the decision would be respected. Else, she could remain in the helpline's service flow, plugging into the existing systems of care and protection.

That first-level analysis steered Jeroo away from the conventional scope of a 'helpline'. The questions in her head, and those asked by activists who had shaped the children's movement in Mumbai, led her to give the idea its arms and legs:

This tele-helpline would be different.

It would reach out to children. Not wait for them to call.

Awareness of how to use a phone to demand protection and rights would be critical. Outreach and public education would have to be rigorous.

There was value at the delivery end of the service too. A well networked phone service would reduce the continuous struggle of organizations in reaching children in crisis at the right time, at the right place.

Jeroo knew that a service run by professionals would have to pass multiple tests before being allowed into children's webs of trust and friendship. That would drain time and resources. Besides, street children shaped and changed their worlds at any given opportunity. Why not have young people run their own helpline?

What value system would the helpline run on?

"Respect for the independence, and wisdom of the children." Children would decide how to solve their problems, without any force or overbearing guidance by the adult world. In the late 1980s, child participation hadn't quite gained currency among organizations working with children in India. But it would drive this helpline at all times, to every milestone. The adults in this

universe would act as facilitators. They would need orientation and training to perform this new role.

Who would provide the services?

The helpline would align – for the first time ever – all organizations working with Mumbai children into one service hub. Civil Society Organizations (CSO)s would coordinate to ensure that children accessed relevant outfits at critical times, depending on the kind of support they needed.

But where were the phones? Everywhere, it seemed. In 1993–94, in Mumbai city, there was one Public Call Office (PCO) every 100 metres.

Unwittingly, Jeroo had timed the service right at the start of India's globalization process, when children and public phones were beginning to crowd city streets in good tandem! The emergency service would make them work for each other.

By 1993, Jeroo, the trained social worker, had the Tele-Helpline SWOT (Strength-Weakness-Opportunities-Threats) figured out. The analysis looked good. When she took the idea to the street children, their response was electric. They were ready for take-off.



CIF Photobank

But the organized, professional world of social workers, funders and academics tore into Jeroo's blue-sky plan.

"It's an upper-middle-class idea."

"Street kids using a telephone? Who will allow a street child to call?"

"What about language?"

"Would NGOs come together to form one service?"

"Where was the bandwidth to deal with a 24-hour service?"

Jeroo took the questions to the children. They fumed and threatened a dharna (agitation). She suggested that they convert their emotion into logical empirical data. *"Children were our best partners for bringing life back into the Helpline plans,"* she remembers. *"Many could easily pull together a resource book on, say, free services for children and free food places in the city."* For sure they could compile a credible market research for this service.

The children designed and conducted a needs assessment study with 500 peers. A pictographic questionnaire was developed. They went around asking their friends if they would use a phone service run by street youth: Why? When? Where? What would be their expectations?

The research study revealed overwhelming support for the phone service. Here was advocacy backed by street-level data—a strategy that continues in CHILDLINE.

The other tricky business was getting CSOs to form a partnership.

Jeroo had earlier attempted to bring Mumbai organizations working with children onto a collaborative platform called Unnati. The initiative had failed. Reason: CSOs brought different approaches, worked with different profiles of children, had different service standards, and different leadership styles.

This time Jeroo was on a new track. The helpline would fly on the wings of differences. Simple. Because different kinds of organizations were needed to serve different kinds of street children, with different service needs, in different parts of the city at different times of the day.

"Differences were a good thing," Jeroo says. *"We would align without giving up on any individual traits. Within the partnership, we were aware that this was not about us, our identities or our power struggles. It was about the children."*

She knew that a common vision for the tele-helpline would have to develop among the partners. The partnership would need space and time to design the implementation mechanisms. They would have to grow into the service together.



A core group of voluntary organizations working with street children got together to flesh out the service blueprint. They were not forging a new relationship. As a social work student at TISS, Jeroo had volunteered in some of the organizations. She had placed many of her students in others during her stint as TISS faculty. And, finally, TISS's backing brought uncontested credibility to Jeroo's ideas.

The partners engaged in many hours of first-level consultation, design, planning, and pre-empting black holes. The kids came to them and bombarded them with hard questions.

*"We roam ten cities. How will we remember ten numbers?"
"It costs money to make a phone call. And what happens when we are broke?"*

What they were asking for was a toll-free number.

They were also saying that the helpline couldn't limit itself to a city, because its users are not bound by territory. The service would have to travel across the country, just like the children it served.

In 1993, Dr Desai sent a letter to the state telephone department, MTNL (Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited), requesting a national toll-free number for the children of India. It was a simple pitch: the Government of India was a signatory to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990). As part of its treaty obligations, it was logical that the Department of Telecommunications (DOT) should provide a toll-free number for a child protection service for the country.

TISS did not hear from DOT for three years. After two dharnas by the children, and the threat of a hunger strike, the national toll-free number—1098—was allotted. By now the calendar had turned to 1996. Then came the implementation storm.

Jeroo, supported by two TISS graduates, Prakash Fernandes and Meghna Sawant, had to work out the execution details of '1098'.

Partner organizations and TISS assessed the vulnerabilities of children who live and work in Mumbai, and compiled a directory of services available to them. They came together in a second round of consultations with the children. The upshot was the final operational framework of the service.

First, the name. Frankly, 'One-Zero-Nine-Eight' did not resonate with Jeroo. She was looking for a teaser, a catch line that would excite the children. And make it easy for them to memorize the number.

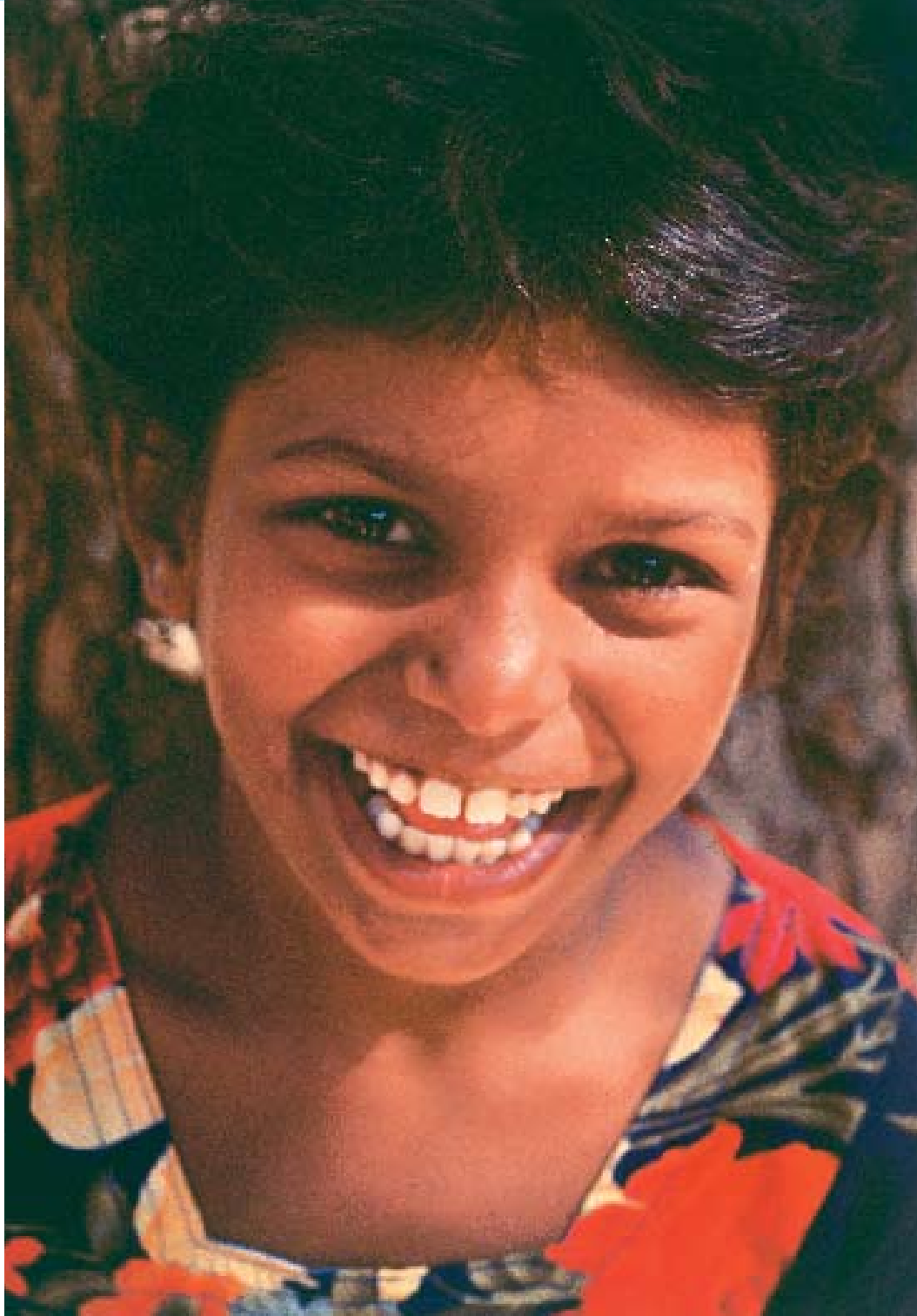
The kids got it! *"Dus... Nau... Aath !"* (Ten... Nine... Eight!), they shouted. The numbers were in decreasing order, and easy to remember.

Some children suggested Hotline. Others suggested Chaar Line (4 Lines), because of the four-digit number. Father Placie Fonseca, Director of Snehasadan, and friend and mentor to Jeroo and to hundreds of Mumbai children, suggested CHILDLINE. The children gave their approval. The helpline had a name: CHILDLINE 1098 (Ten-Nine-Eight).

Next, the logo.

Once the street children understood that the logo would give the service a look, be their identity, and help children recall 1098 in a flash, they were sure that they wanted a bindaas (carefree) child.

"We know how to conceal our pain," they said. A smiling child would offer another important message: If CHILDLINE didn't make children happy, would they call?



The kids got it!

"Dus... Nav... Aath !"
(Ten... Nine... Eight!),"
they shouted.

The numbers were in
decreasing order, and
easy to remember.

Where would CHILDLINE intervene?

There was a consensus that this would be a service for the most vulnerable groups of children in extremely difficult situations.

Would that mean that CHILDLINE would rescue children who were caught travelling ticketless? Would CHILDLINE give young people money to buy houses? No. CHILDLINE was not a service for free-loaders. It would ensure that children travelling ticketless were not abused by the police. And those in need of shelter would get it. Parallely, it would work with children to build an understanding of their responsibilities.

The CSO partners laid out a list of broad intervention pockets: medical emergencies, linking children to shelter programmes, tracking and restoration of children back to their families, providing emotional support and guidance to children, performing the last rites for children who die alone in the street, and offering general information about services for children.

Institutionalization of children would be the last resort.



Illustration: Preetika Sah

Who would CHILDLINE serve?

“Initially, we wanted CHILDLINE to remain focused on the street,” Jeroo remembers. But early on, the service received two calls from adults reporting abuse of domestic child labour in their buildings. One of them, a young girl, came to CHILDLINE with cigarette burn marks all over her body¹.

In discussions following the case, street kids said ‘yes’ to making CHILDLINE accessible to larger sections of children and youth. “They realized that a lot of middle-class children, and those who are underprivileged, but live in high-rise buildings, have serious crises. They couldn’t do much about their problems because they didn’t know where to go,” Jeroo says.

¹ David Bornstein, *How To Change the World-Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, Penguin Books India, 2005, p.79

How would the service be implemented?

The CHILDLINE service structure was rolled out along the lines of the city's telecommunication zones. Call centres or organizations receiving the 1098 calls were located in every telecom zone. They were called CHILDLINE Collaborative Agencies. Snehasadan, YUVA (Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action) and the Vatsalya Foundation signed up for this role.

They were backed by CHILDLINE Support Agencies that would follow-up and track calls referred to them by the collaborative partner. Hamara Club, Prem Sagar and Aasara took on this responsibility. TISS came on board as a facilitative nodal agency.

Children suggested that they team up as volunteers for the CHILDLINE service. The older street youth could even answer the phones. Their logic was that a caller, on hearing a peer at the other end, would immediately mark 1098 as a credible service, as their own. Training programmes were organized for the street youth for handling calls effectively. Basic first-aid training and awareness of legal procedures was given to all team members.

After four years of preparation, the first 1098 call rang at Vatsalya Foundation on 20 June, 1996. The Dorabji Tata Trust provided the start-up resources. The energy came from the street itself.

Street children and youth flanked out to the outer limits of Greater Mumbai to advertise CHILDLINE within their then 400,000 strong community. They mapped children at high risk, identified pockets of high violations, located entry points for a child into the city, zeroed in on high-priority regions and formulated their awareness plans.

Their action plan was drawn up on the following strategy:

Since children worked during the day, all outreach and awareness programmes were timed for late night, early morning or during the post-lunch afternoon lull.

Outreach was not to just inform, but also to establish real rapport with CHILDLINE users. It took the form of first aid camps in the middle of the night, street plays, picnics, parties, movies... just as the callers liked them. The success parameter of an outreach was the numbers of children who promised to return with more friends, and did.

Outreach and education exercises were the best avenues for eliciting user feedback and checking out implementation glitches. Children were encouraged to make test calls and report their experiences.

The feedback was that owners of PCO booths and shopkeepers with telephones were not allowing children to dial 1098. This led to a sustained advocacy campaign with public telephone service providers. DOT was asked to provide a letter certifying 1098 as a toll-free helpline. Copies were made and distributed widely on the streets.

Then many children complained that the CHILDLINE social worker never showed up, even after making earnest telephonic promises. Team members reported they were having trouble in locating callers. A system was devised where standard questions were introduced to note the time of the call accurately, and register specific landmarks and the clothes that the child was wearing. CHILDLINE team members were given shirts and caps of a particular colour to make identification easier¹.

In the first year, CHILDLINE fielded 6,000 calls.

¹ David Bornstein, *How To Change the World-Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, Penguin Books India, 2005, p.79



In three years of service, CHILDLINE tweaked its operations, slipped up often, and learnt valuable lessons from partners, especially children.

The mistakes and lessons converged into a set of core principles of its city operations:

Principle 1:

**Listen to children. Let them decide for CHILDLINE.
Be quick to admit a mistake. Be reconciliatory and solutions-driven.**

In 1998, CHILDLINE received a call from Mumbai Central Railway Station. Babloo, severely stricken with tuberculosis and HIV positive, was losing consciousness. He needed urgent medical attention.

A CHILDLINE team member rushed Babloo to the nearest hospital. The hospital refused to admit him. A doctor prescribed some medication and sent him away. The CHILDLINE team member took Babloo back to the Mumbai Central Station. Without instructing his friends on how to administer the medicine, he left him on the station and went his way. A few hours later Babloo died.

All hell broke loose on Mumbai Central Railway Station. Anger swept through the platforms. The children were infuriated. CHILDLINE had caused the death of their friend. They threw CHILDLINE out of the station. They wanted CHILDLINE to shut down in all of Mumbai.

Finally, the children agreed to a public meeting with CHILDLINE at the station lobby. CHILDLINE apologized. They pleaded that 1998 be given one more chance. The children agreed on the condition that they would develop a system of checks and balances to ensure that such situations never happened again. They divided the zones of the station amongst themselves,

patrolled their areas and connected children facing emergencies in their pockets to 1098. They met with the CHILDLINE teams every month to assess the performance of the service, highlight issues and resolve problems.

This has remained the basis of the CHILDLINE grassroots strategy until date. Open houses every month connect children with CHILDLINE teams, strengthen customer touch and deepen the ownership of children over 1098.

Principle 2:

While every call to 1098 is important, CHILDLINE has to set limits to its service.

Children called CHILDLINE when their adult friends needed help. 1098 helped elderly Shanta tai (aunt), who was suffering from acute jaundice. It cremated 45-year-old Gopi Bhaiya (big brother), who drank himself to death.

In its first year, CHILDLINE was helping everyone. Money was running out. The calls kept coming. In 1998, CHILDLINE Mumbai faced closure. Hard decisions had to be taken. CHILDLINE had to learn to say no. While 1098 understood the need of a child for emotional support after the loss of an adult friend, the service would have to steel itself and not respond to intervention calls for adults.

Finally, the children agreed to define the boundaries of CHILDLINE's service: CHILDLINE would reach out to children from 0–18 years and in extreme emergencies to young adults up to the age of 25.

Principle 3:

1098 could not remain an independent, citizen-sector initiative. It could not work alone. CHILDLINE would have to weave into every government system at all levels.

In 1997, a CHILDLINE team member on his outreach rounds found a young man slumped outside the Nair Hospital in Mumbai. Some people recognized him as Bhim Bahadur.

CHILDLINE learnt he was HIV positive, suffering from TB, and had been thrown out of the hospital. This was not the first time that the hospital had forced him out. The team member made a harness out of his shirt, put the boy on his back and took him back in the hospital.

After three hours the doctors re-admitted him. For two weeks, his treatment was supervised by CHILDLINE until it identified a hospice where Bhim Bahadur spent his last days.

In another incident, the Railway Police forced 13-year-old Hassan to pick up a broken body from the railway tracks at Dadar Railway Station. He was given ten rupees for handling a bloody corpse.

And then CHILDLINE got the case of 17-year-old Meeta, who had been thrown out of a train in the middle of the night for travelling without a ticket.

CHILDLINE would have to do something to transform the attitudes of the drivers of mainstream systems. It set up the Mumbai City Advisory Board (CAB), with members from the city administration, the education department, local representatives of the juvenile justice system, police, media etc. to anchor the 1098 service. But more ideas were needed.

The 1098 countdown had just begun.

Other cities were beginning to enquire about the service. But for CHILDLINE the next milestone was to find a door leading them to the Government of India.





Scale First. Consolidate Later.



CIF Photobank

In 1997, Maneka Gandhi, the then Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E) visited Childline UK, a national tele-helpline for children. A light bulb lit up in her head. This model would work perfectly in India. It was inexpensive, low on infrastructure, and had a potential pan-India bandwidth.

Back home, Gandhi's office had come under sharp public scrutiny for its nominal engagement with the country's children. The Ministry of Human Resources and Development, and 14 other ministries

that were responsible for delivering child protection laws, were also under fire.

In 1992, India signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Implicit in becoming a State Party to the Convention is the treaty's obligation to implement it, with all the reforms and revisions that this might entail, and the responsibility to report performance to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It was also incumbent on the signatory to actively make the Convention and country action widely known¹.

The deadline for the India country report to the UNCRC had expired two years ago². The eight CSO shadow reports that had already been submitted before the UNCRC only served to uncover the country's pitiable track record on every child rights parameter.

Gandhi knew that she had to do something urgently. On her return, she tabled the Childline UK idea before her bureaucrats.

They pointed to CHILDLINE Mumbai³.

The timing was perfect. Telephone booths were starting to penetrate towns, districts, and villages, wiring up the country into an enormous tele-density hub.

In a serendipitous roll of appointments, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had at the time lined up senior bureaucrats who brought a personal commitment to building safe futures for children. *"It was a happy coincidence,"* remarked A.P. Singh, who served as Deputy Secretary in the Ministry at the time.

'Happy coincidences' occur most in the lives of those who are prepared. CHILDLINE Mumbai had been gearing up for bureaucrats to come knocking. When they did, CHILDLINE lost no time in demonstrating its replicability. It had already responded to 14,000 calls and the service had spread to Nagpur, Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Delhi.

¹ Razia Ismail Abbasi, 'Keeping a Watch on Child Rights in India', *Combat Law*, Volume 3 Issue 1, April-May, 2004

² The deadline for India's report to the UNCRC was 1995.

³ The TISS Board included senior bureaucrats of the MSJ&E who were aware of CHILDLINE'S existence.

CHILDLINE till then, was unaware of the UK programme. On close analysis, the team marked several differences from the Mumbai model:

(1) The UK model was not toll-free. Though the callers did not have to pay, the call tariffs were picked up by British Telecom and Childline, UK;

(2) Childline UK did not physically connect with children calling the service;

(3) It was not a government partnership.



The due diligence reports were positive. “While government programmes never quite reach the bottom of the barrel, here was a service that was being run by children themselves,” said Singh.

At the time, the bureaucrats were scouting around for twenty first century ideas to energize their social security programmes. They were ready to be inventive about how to de-bureaucratize government schemes. According to Anand Bordia, who was a Joint Secretary in MSJ&E in 1997, “We wanted to experiment with structures that would restrict the role of the government as ‘fund provider’ for schemes and programmes.”

In June 1998, CHILDLINE-TISS organized a national consultation for the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. 117 child

rights activists and practitioners from 29 cities participated. Together, they pitched for a national Child Helplines Scheme, a draft of which was presented to the government. There were two reasons why child rights activists were rooting for an independent scheme. One, a Child Helpline Scheme would shift the welfarist slant of government schemes, ushering in a spirit of entitlements in the government’s commitment to India’s children. The rights-based scheme would ensure that a child could demand timely action and provide feedback as well.

Two, such a scheme would formalize and secure the government’s financial commitment to an emergency phone service for children. This would give CHILDLINE some immunity from the vagaries of budgetary allocations and

financial redistribution within departments and ministries. However, the Child Helpline Scheme did not materialize.

“The secretaries in the ministry told us that the process could take years, would only increase the bureaucracy, and the scheme might never get off the ground,” Jeroo remembers.

But Gandhi whipped up enormous delight by announcing that her Ministry would fund the scaling-up of Childline. She made a personal commitment that by 2002, CHILDLINE would be in every Indian city with a population of one lakh. The government allotted replication funds for CHILDLINE from the Integrated Street Children’s Programme, an informal programme of the MSJ&E.

The target set by Gandhi was 23 cities in four years. The Ministry suggested the creation of a separate professional entity, the CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF). On May 28, 1999 CIF was registered. It would be responsible for initiating and monitoring the CHILDLINE service and undertake research and advocacy in the area of child protection.

CIF had its work cut out. Its four-member team went out on a tear. They visited 19 cities in year one. By the summer of 2000, CHILDLINE was ringing in 15 cities. And by 2002, the CHILDLINE map had 42 cities hooked up.

“We envisioned CIF as a professional hybrid organization that would draw the best skills and practices from the government, civil society and the corporate sector,” remembers Singh. “We wanted to set the highest professional service standards, and have remunerations to match those standards.”

It was strategic overdrive. “We had to prove quickly to the government that CHILDLINE was a cost-effective, scaleable model,” Jeroo says. “Were it not for Maneka Gandhi’s push, we would never have reached critical mass so soon.” The replication of the 1098 service was based on the strategy of ‘scale first, then consolidate’. “It makes sound business sense,” Jeroo explains. “We had to reach a strategic optimal size. This was the only way to demonstrate that 1098 was replicable.”

But how CHILDLINE scaled was also important. The tele-helpline structure and service systems had already been developed during the 1998 national consultation. Now CIF mapped out a clear expansion plan based on data, reports, children’s testimonials and hundreds of conversations with organizations working with children across India. “We did not jump from one city to another at whim,”

Jeroo says. “Our approach was systematic and we went first to cities that were child protection hotspots. Our model wasn’t cast in stone either. Our partners adapted and changed depending on what would work best in a city.”

CHILDLINE spread as a social franchise. It replicated as one national brand with uniform operating procedures and standards, run by local decentralized organizations.

Franchisees received training and promotional materials, a call-tracking database, hardware (two phone lines and one computer), onsite support, a collective negotiating voice, and a small start-up fund. There were many reasons for using franchising as an appropriate replication strategy:¹

Increase in unmet demand for the service

During the Mumbai national consultation, child rights organizations reported that children often called them informally to chat or to report a mishap. Butterflies, a Delhi-based CHILDLINE partner, had managed an informal phone service for many years out of the residence of its Executive Director, Rita Panicker. They redicted that this attraction among children to phones would only grow.



¹ Adapted from Anita du Toit, *Social Franchising as Organizational Format-An Overview*, March 2003, Franchising Plus and NAMAC Trust, South Africa.

Underutilized capacities of existing facilities

The government had begun laying expansive Information and Communication Technology (ICT) networks across the country. Yet no vision document by the state had thought of bringing technology and child rights together. As children and public telephone booths became ubiquitous on Indian streets, it made sense to wire them into a service that would open up the access gates to a larger state child protection system.

Customers who would be willing to pay for the service

While children could not pay for every call, they brought in rich non-financial resources to CHILDLINE—energy for outreach and promotion of the service, time for accountability checks on CHILDLINE partners, and willingness to serve as CHILDLINE volunteers. Most importantly, they linked their friends into the CHILDLINE network, making this a street service rooted in trust-based relationships.

Availability of a trained pool of practitioners/potential franchisees

CHILDLINE was not going to invest in brick and mortar. Instead, it would be a service that existing child rights organizations would take on and leverage. By providing their infrastructure and experience, the several credible organizations that were already working with children would be able to reduce the cost of the service, ramp up the capacity and availability of 1098 (by bringing in professionals to deliver the service), and not give up any independence or control by joining the network. The selection of franchisees was critical for the success of this replication approach. Organizations that had a crisis culture and that were rights-driven made the fit with this model.

Existence of a franchiser that ensured continuity in management, brought in cross-sectoral resources, and supported franchisees in raising local money for the service

With the formalization of CIF and government resources, CHILDLINE had addressed one of the biggest risks of replication: money for the running of the service. Over the 10 years of its existence, government funding has been inadequate for sustaining CHILDLINE. CIF, as the franchiser, has taken on a fundraising role and is supporting local franchisees in raising resources for their city initiative.

In 1999, UNICEF¹ came on board as a CHILDLINE partner, further cementing the spread of the service. The advertising agency, Ogilvy & Mather became the branding partner for CHILDLINE. Another policy that CHILDLINE adopted was that corporate houses that wished to engage with 1098 would come on board as full strategic partners, providing pro bono skills and direction over a period of time, rather than handing out one-time cheques.

Some partners of CHILDLINE claim that the rapid replication of 1098 eroded service quality in many cities. *“CHILDLINE went from being a merry-go-round to a giant wheel in one shot,”* remarks Samuel Nazareth, Director, AAMRAE, a CHILDLINE partner in Mumbai. *“Many of our initiatives that were at the heart of CHILDLINE were reduced to 1098 extension counters.”*

The point is well taken. But Jeroo counters, *“Had we not touched 50 cities in 5 years, had we not been called by 4.5 million children from across the country, had we not quickly come together to become the largest child rights partnership in India, the service would not have reaped the benefits that it did.”*

And critical numbers of children would not have been plugged into a coordinated service web of survival, protection, participation, and rights.

¹ UNICEF had supported Mumbai CHILDLINE in 1996

"Had we not touched 50 cities in 5 years, had we not been called by 4.5 million children from across the country, had we not quickly come together to become the largest child rights partnership in India, the service would not have reaped the benefits that it did."

Arjun Chhabra

Tarun Chhabra









CHILDLINE in Indore gets a call from 13-year-old Ameeta. Her father is an alcoholic, her mother, dead. She cannot remember when her father last had work. There is no food in the home. She is planning to run away.

In the last 10 years, India has made remarkable progress. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown at an average of 7 percent, the stock markets have hit historic highs, the Information Technology sector is booming. International studies predict that by 2010 India will be among the largest economies in the world.

It really doesn't matter to Ameeta.

Smart
Investments
for
Smart
Futures

Tarun Chhabra



In terms of human development indicators, India ranks 127 in the world.

The Planning Commission admits that it can only reach half the population below the poverty line through its Public Distribution System.

60 per cent of the country's population is engaged in agriculture, of which 25 per cent earns less than hundred rupees a day.

Direct spending on India's children remains 4.91 per cent of the Union Budget.¹

How does this impact children?

- One out of 16 children die before the age of one, and one out of 11 die before the age of five².
- In 2002, *The Statesman* reported that roughly 2 million children are forced into prostitution every year³.
- 35 per cent of all births go unregistered, denying children their right to an identity and nationality⁴.
- 2.5 million children die in India every year, accounting for one in five deaths in the world, with girls being 50 percent more likely to die⁵.
- India has the world's largest number of sexually abused children, with a child below 16 years raped every 155th minute, a child below 10 every 13th hour, and one in every 10 children sexually abused at any point in time.

CHILDLINE began ringing just when India stepped into the era of liberalization. The economy shifted gears to enter a new and unpredictable period in its history, and social security nets were pulled from under the feet of more than half the country's population, leading to an increase in poverty. Unemployment, rural indebtedness, migration, disaster management, food security, terrorism, and political riots spiralled—all factors that prompt violence and push children into emergency situations.

In an India that's supposed to be 'shining', 400,000 children go missing every year, only to surface as labour in markets that must produce continuously to keep the Sensex on its historic run. India has the largest child labour force in the world. According to the 2001 Census, 1,25,91,667 children in the age group of 5–14 years work in India, with the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh topping the list of underage workers.⁶

Every call to CHILDLINE is a comment from a child on the state of Global India.

¹ Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, Ajay Kumar Sinha, Abhijeet Nirmal, *What does Union Budget 2006-07 have for children?*, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, 2006

² Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, *Status of Children in India INC*, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, 2006, p.3

³ ISS, *Trafficking in Women and Children in India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2006

^{4,5} Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, *Status of Children in India INC*, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, 2006, p.3

⁶ Enakshi Ganguly Thukral, *Status of Children in India INC*, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, 2006, p.117

Elements of CHILDLINE's Intervention

Since its inception in 1996, every intervention of CHILDLINE has been built around the following key elements:

Catalysing Child Protection Mechanisms

When a child dials 1098, the call sets off a chain of child protection action with the local juvenile justice system, the police, the health, education and labour departments, and the media. CHILDLINE catalyses every entity that is directly or indirectly charged with protecting the rights of the child.

In 2000, CHILDLINE was formally recognized within the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000 (JJA), as an intermediary through which children in need of care and protection could be produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC). *“This formalized the role of CHILDLINE within the country’s legal procedures and was a significant recognition of its role as a catalyst,”* says Dr. Neelima Mehta, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Mumbai.

In Mehta’s assessment, CHILDLINE’s City Advisory Boards (CAB) best exemplify the catalytic functions of 1098.

In cities where 1098 rings, its services are overseen by a cross-sectoral advisory group comprising social workers,

representatives of the city municipal corporation, the police, the judiciary, and members of the health, education and labour departments, plus the media.

“In every city, CAB forges a micro-to-macro connection at every level, and seeks to converge different elements of the local child protection system, like the secretary of the women and child department, or the police commissioner,” Mehta says. However, CHILDLINE partners have to constantly be on their toes to keep the CAB engaged.

In the districts, 1098 cannot spur child protection without the partnership of the panchayati raj (local government) institutions. For instance, in Waynad district, Kerala, CHILDLINE has been invited by the local government to be the one-stop consulting/reference point on all CRC issues.

CHILDLINE believes that it needs to engage in many more ways with the state to ensure greater vigilance over children. Coordination channels between the central and state governments, or between states through which children migrate at will, need to be built. Inter-ministerial convergences need to be generated and maintained.

1098 has taken early steps in this direction: CHILDLINE in Kerala and West Bengal have formed state CHILDLINE

Forums to advocate directly with their states, ask for budgetary allocations for CHILDLINE, and develop robust models for arresting local patterns of child violation. There have been early successes. In Kerala, for example, the state government has committed funds for CHILDLINE in its State Plan of Action for children.

CHILDLINE has also been building convergences within the civil society sector. *“The child rights sector in India is an active and vocal space,”* comments Kajol Menon. *“Many local initiatives are demanding accountability from the government. What is needed now is for them to string into a national mosaic that acts and negotiates collectively with the Government of India.”*

In 2005–06, CIF, in partnership with Plan International, launched a national process to bolster the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) in India.

The initiative entails:

- mapping citizens’ groups and organizations that are engaging with local JJA systems;
- profiling good practices of active JJA institutions in the country; and
- bringing all players together in zonal consultations to develop a coordinated countrywide plan of action.

It’s a 1098 priority: the JJA has to initiate action everywhere.

Building Capacities and New Perspectives on Child Rights

In the initial years of CHILDLINE, city teams ran training and awareness programmes with the local administration, but these did not yield sustained impact. CHILDLINE realized that building child-friendly environments could not be left to chance.

In 2000, CHILDLINE partnered with the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD), an autonomous training body of the Government of India, and UNICEF to launch the National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP).

NICP aims to mainstream the protection of child rights into all governance systems (local, district, state, and national); law enforcement agencies; civic administration and service infrastructure (health, education, transport, etc.); corporate social responsibility policies and media reporting. In short, all processes that impact the “creation of a child-friendly India.”

NICP gave 1098 a new name, Allied Systems, i.e., mainstream systems that it would have to collaborate with in order to strengthen child protection in India.

The list includes the police, the health care system, the transport system, the labour department, the media, the department of telecommunications, the corporate sector,

elected representatives, and citizens at large. In short, everybody!

NICP runs on a two-forked strategy. One, it is focused on extensive child rights training to shift the attitude, knowledge, and skills of functionaries in the Allied Systems. Two, it engages in large-scale advocacy to accelerate policy change, is involved in child budgeting, and in seeking amendments to existing laws and the passage of new legislation.

Every year, CHILDLINE conducts up to 180 trainings through the NICP framework. In 65 cities, CHILDLINE teams have identified a pool of five local resource persons who are child rights experts. They conduct up to five trainings in a year in their cities, each time with a different stakeholder profile.

The experience has been bitter-sweet.

A sample of the success: *“In 2003–04, CHILDLINE Kolkata trained up 411 police stations of West Bengal on the ‘Juvenile Justice Act’,”* says Achinto Bhattacharya, Director, CLPOA (City Level Plan of Action for Street and Working Children). Bhattacharya saw police officers crying during their interactions with the children.

Some months later, a policeman on patrol at the Howrah Station saw a girl walking around without any clothes. He reported this case to CHILDLINE. He remembered 1098 because of the training programme.

There have been many points of frustration too. *“Trainings can be thankless, especially with the police,”* comments Inu Annie Stephen, North India Coordinator, CIF. She recounts a classic NICP blooper where the Jaipur CHILDLINE team was forced to train a large group of 100 traffic police personnel in one day: *“Twenty of the policemen slept throughout the training, averring that it was the only time that they had gotten to sleep in a week.”*

Often personnel trained by CHILDLINE get transferred. But even as local 1098 teams despair, in the big picture, the trained government official goes to another corner of the country and brings new energy into the local child rights environment. Swaraj Puri, a senior police officer in Bhopal, used his NICP training to team up with CHILDLINE when he was posted to Indore. Together, they set up child protection desks in local police stations and had the police patrol middle-class localities to prevent cases of violence against women and children.

NICP is ready for its next leap. It is preparing to slide in a child rights curriculum into training academies for civil servants, the police, lawyers, the judiciary, educationists, social workers—institutions that will develop a new generation of skilled and qualified, technical child rights professionals in the country.

Internally, drivers of CHILDLINE also need refresher courses on child rights and new ideas for raising their service quality levels. CHILDLINE city teams operate as an intuitive learning community, teasing out best practices from each other at every opportunity.

Taking Everyone Along :

Building Partnerships for Child Protection

The partnership net of CHILDLINE has extended into a countrywide repatriation web for children.

“In the late 1990s, we got a call from Kolkata,” remembers Sreelekha Ray, Director, VHAT (Voluntary Health Association Tripura). CHILDLINE Vizag had phoned CHILDLINE Kolkata about a child from North Tripura who had been rescued and needed to be repatriated. They couldn’t locate a Tripura partner and asked us to help.

“We were not in the CHILDLINE network then. But we called our partner Shangadeep in the Dharmanagar district, on the Assam-Tripura border.

“Their volunteers cycled 30 kilometres to the village and identified the parents of the child, who confirmed that the girl had been lost when she was 3 years old!

“We had facilitated the full repatriation of the child, sitting in our office, in a space of 30 minutes flat. A classic example of

great coordination across three cities and a district!”. Ray was convinced that VHAT had to be in the CHILDLINE partnership.

CHILDLINE partners constantly send out signals through their radar to other associations and friends to support CHILDLINE, formally and informally.

To use VHAT as an example again. It is the only civil society network in Tripura with a total membership of 60 across the state. All the members help CHILDLINE voluntarily. VHAT averages 10 calls a day from its network members, with reports of situations of child rights violations. Their network pitches in resources when needed, and opens up doors with their district officials.

Children’s Participation

Children have set the agenda of 1098 through open house sessions, outreach programmes, and participation in their own cases. CHILDLINE’s learning is that there is a need to reinforce child participation in all its interventions, along with building up a greater perspective among CHILDLINE members on the value and importance of such participation.

In 2004–05, 48 cities in 7 states organized child participation meets of children from different backgrounds. The questions they asked their local Allied Systems were tough, and ranged from the non-functioning of government schools, to corporal

punishment by teachers, domestic violence, forced labour, non-cooperation by child welfare bodies, lack of access to hospitals and medicines, forced marriage, and violence by the local police. The list was as stark as the experiences of the children.

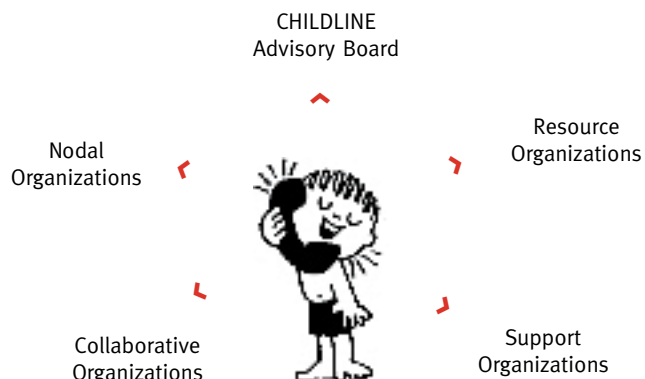
The voices of these children will converge in June 2006 at a national child participation meet in Mumbai, where children will compile a national charter of demands and present it to ministers, bureaucrats, and key stakeholders like UNICEF.

In his book, 'The World is Flat', Thomas Friedman writes that 'India can have the smartest high-tech vanguard in the world, if it does not find a way to bring along more of those who are unable, disabled, undereducated and under-deserved, it will be like a rocket that takes off but quickly falls back to earth for lack of sustained thrust.'

CHILDLINE could not agree more.



Management and Structure of the CHILDLINE Service



CHILDLINE works within an organised service structure in every city. The main components are:

CHILDLINE Advisory Board (CAB)

CAB is the principal policy-making body of CHILDLINE at the city level. It comprises government officials, NGOs, corporates, and concerned individuals. CAB reviews the performance of CHILDLINE, sets new directions, recommends strategies for smartening up the service, and opens up mainstream systems for training and advocacy.

CHILDLINE Nodal Organizations

The CHILDLINE nodal organizations anchor and facilitate the city service structure. They coordinate between 1098 service providers and ensure that service glitches are ironed out. They are charged with the responsibility of networking with, and training members of the local Allied System, coordinate and call the CAB meetings.

CHILDLINE Collaborative Organizations

The CHILDLINE collaborative agencies are phone-receiving centres. Each city has one or more collaborative organization depending on its population and geographic spread. The functions of the collaborative organization include receiving 1098 calls from children/adults, responding to the calls, and undertaking long-term follow-up of the calls received. Additionally, the collaborative organizations are responsible for awareness, training, research, and documentation.

CHILDLINE Support Organizations

Calls from the collaborative organizations are referred to the support organizations, which provide call follow-up. They assist with publicity, testing of phones in the city, training, research, and documentation. These are usually organizations with substantial community outreach programmes.

CHILDLINE Resource Organizations

These provide specialized services such as counselling, shelter, legal advice, sponsorship, adoption, etc. They are willing to extend their services to children referred by CHILDLINE.



Tarun Chhabra

CHILDLINE's Levels of Intervention

CHILDLINE borrows from Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory which looks at the development of children within the system of relationships that form their environment. The 1098 service analyses and intervenes at every level of the child's environment to spur relevant child-friendly systems.

Micro system:

Providing the child with the full 1098 service package

At this level, the individual child receives the full 1098 service package—calls are received, emergency rescue and relief provided, grassroots outreach and awareness programmes conducted, and open house and children's meets organized. The child participates and directs the nature and scope of the 1098 interventions.

Meso system:

Catalysing the Allied Systems

At this level, CHILDLINE works with the systems in the immediate outer environment of the child. These are systems with which the children struggle everyday. Mechanisms like the CHILDLINE Advisory Boards (CAB), the state forums of advocacy, and the National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP) have been set up as formal spaces through which CHILDLINE can dialogue, train, and negotiate with functionaries of the Allied Systems (the police, department of health, transport, railways, labour) in the immediate environment of the child.

Macro system:

National and International lobbying

CHILDLINE works closely with national and international networks to ensure that larger political, economic and social systems recognize the active citizenship of children and accord priority to child rights on national and international agendas.

Making Technology Work for Children

Four years before corporate India started on a historic BPO run, CHILDLINE was wiring up its national service with ‘call centres’ for child protection.

“When we started CHILDLINE, we weren’t conscious of the potential role of technology in this initiative,” says Jeroo Billimoria. “As the technology revolution started changing everything around us, we realized that we had to make the most of this opportunity.”

There were major growth challenges, and CIF began looking at new-age technology for answers.

First, the challenges:

- For CHILDLINE to grow, the per-call cost would have to decrease as coverage of the service increased.
- CHILDLINE would have to accomplish large volumes of advocacy work based on small transactions – individual calls made by children and adults. Sometimes one phone call could spur CHILDLINE to pursue a policy, or lobby for precedent setting legal judgement (see Box: Wiping India off the Paedophile’s Map). Every transaction would then need documentation, tracking, and follow-up.
- CHILDLINE would have to work as one coordinated service machinery. Every call centre would need to be connected to all the others through a central nervous system.

CIF turned for help to Tata Consulting Services (TCS), a Mumbai-based, international leader in technology consulting. In 1998, TCS came on board as the technology partners of CHILDLINE. F.C Kohli, Chairman, TCS became a member of the CIF Board.

In May 1995, Sun Microsystems launched the Java technology, which changed the face of the computing world. TCS proposed the development of ChildNET, a Java-based call documentation software that would classify, record, and follow-up calls received on 1098 from all parts of the country.



Illustration: Preetika Sah

CHILDLINE calls from
June 1996 to March 2006

CATEGORIES	
Intervention	
Crisis intervention	
Medical	47,522
Shelter	41,838
Repatriation	23,837
Rescue	12,309
Death related	598
Sponsorship	23,712
Missing children	50,686
Emotional support + guidance	1,69,610
Information	1,523,549
Others	7,734,943
Unclassified	3,083
TOTAL	9,629,687

For TCS, it was a great opportunity to try out the new technology. At the outset, the plan looked simple. The software would be installed in every CHILDLINE call centre. The CHILDLINE teams would follow a series of drop-down tables, voice commands, and pictures to record and track every call received. At the end of the month, they would upload their data via the Internet to the CIF base in Mumbai. Here, the local data would be aggregated into national statistics, the numbers analysed, and returned to cities as value-added information that could inform local and national policy making.

With a critical mass of data flowing in, ChildNET would make it possible to study:

- a) the patterns of call pouring in from everywhere;
- b) child protection hot spots in the country
- c) the quality and timeliness of response and action by the government systems of childcare and protection.

In short, ChildNET would become the advocacy voice of children.

TCS worked under serious constraints. There were limited resources for software development. The audience profile of ChildNET comprised people who had never worked on computer software.

After eight months, ChildNET was ready to be piloted. A two-member CIF team consisting of Prakash Fernandes and Denis Joseph travelled for a year, installing ChildNET and providing software training in 24 cities. The team waited for the data to roll in. Nothing came. It was a huge disappointment.

At many places, the software had crashed. At others, the content language was a problem. At yet others, ChildNET-trained staffers had moved to other jobs. TCS had to modify and design three versions of ChildNET. But the struggle continues.

In a good year, not more than 40 per cent of the CHILDLINE teams send in data directly on ChildNET. Teams, however, maintain meticulous call registers—hardcopies that track cases in detail. Joseph and his colleagues procure photocopies of the case registers and enter the national data manually into the main ChildNET hub for analysis.

In the last two years, ChildNET has registered 75,000 cases, providing a first-hand snapshot of what children have to say about the state of their country.

Here's an analysis of CHILDLINE calls from June 1996 to MArch 2006.

The Statistics

2% of calls are requests for intervention in severe crises (repatriation, rescue, medical, death, sponsorship, restoration of missing children).

The Analysis

It is difficult – sometimes impossible – to report a crisis in a moment over the phone.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Increase grassroots outreach, develop stronger community vigilance, and empower locals to act in situations of violence.
- Ramp up city CHILDLINES with more community-based volunteers and child rights professionals located in child protection hotspots within the city.

The Statistics

1.7% of calls request emotional support and guidance. 80.3% of all calls are chat, silent, crank, and blank calls.

The Analysis

With traditional family structures breaking down, children are looking outside for emotional anchors and guidance in dealing with everyday life situations. Every chat and/or blank call represents the emotional need of a child to connect with a friendly voice, an empathetic listener.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Upgrade counselling skills and increase the efficiency of responses.
- Deepen skills to convert blank calls into full counselling cases.

The Statistics

15.8% calls are for information about child-related services.

The Analysis

In 10 years, CHILDLINE has evolved as a single information window on resources available for child care and protection.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Tighten information management systems. Expand databases.
- Develop new information access mechanisms (such as CHILDLINE booths for children in railway stations and online resource directories for child rights practitioners).

The Statistics

CHILDLINE intervenes directly in 19.6% of all calls. By international Tele-Helpline standards, this is a role of success.

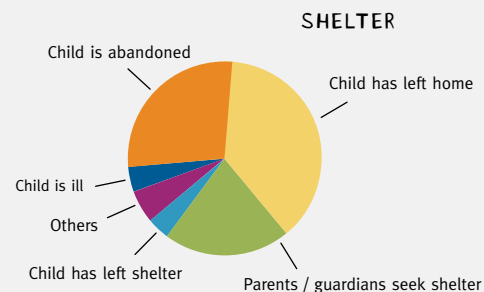
The Analysis

CHILDLINE is on track.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Deepen service quality levels and focus on consolidating city partnerships.

ChildNET Data 2003 - 2005



The Statistics

- 39% of all calls received for shelter are from children who have left home.

26.9% of calls for shelter come from children who have been abandoned by their parents. Significant percentages within this category comprise girls.

- 21.9% of shelter calls come from poverty-stricken parents seeking shelter for their children.

The Analysis

- Economic stress is breaking up families, and parents are looking for safe alternatives for their children.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

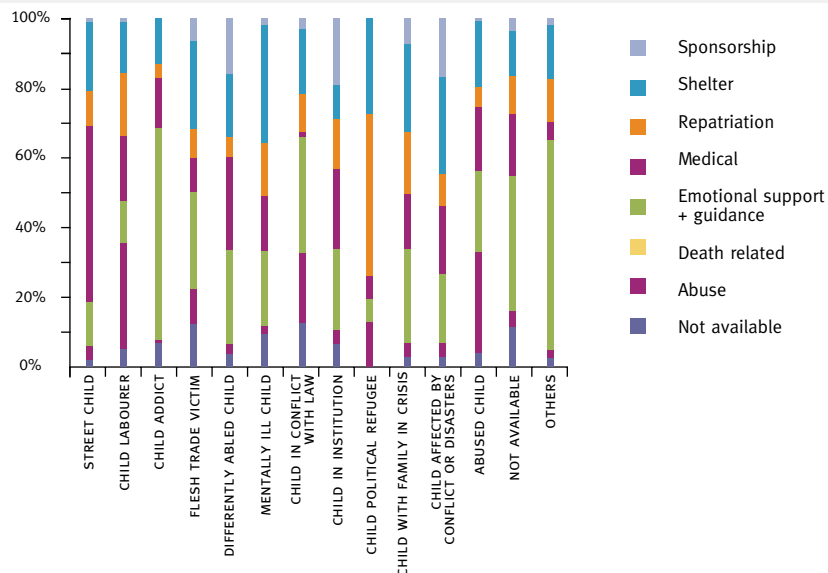
- Advocate for non-institutional community-based programmes that will support and hold poor families together (sponsorships, foster care, day-care centres, adoption).

The Statistics

- The highest numbers of children repatriated by CHILDLINE come from families in crisis (poverty, single-parent families, poor landless labourers, families affected by alcoholism, political conflicts, and disasters).

- In most repatriation cases, children have been rescued from cities and repatriated back to a district, town or village.

- The highest numbers of rescued children from abusive situations are child labourers.



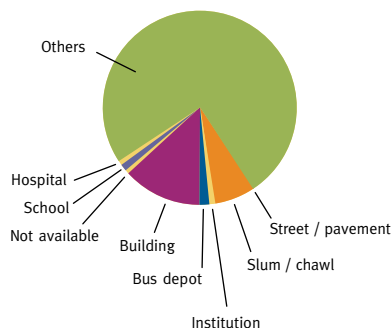
The Analysis

- The highest numbers of repatriated children come from backgrounds of economic and political marginalization.
- For every child rescued by CHILDLINE, two more are caught in abusive situations; rescuing children is not strategy enough.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Move from being reactive to preventive
- Build linkages between child protection and livelihood issues to lessen economic migration of children.

COUNT OF PROBLEM / CALL PLACE



The Statistics

- Though in the majority of calls recorded on ChildNET, the location of the caller is unspecified, 7.3% callers are from slums and chawls (single-room tenements) and 14.1% are from buildings.

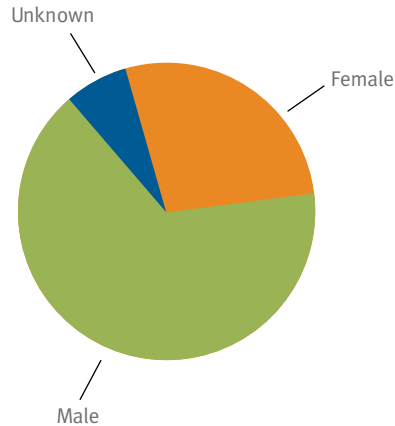
The Analysis

- Users of CHILDLINE are the urban poor and mostly first and second-generation migrants from rural areas.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Take the service to rural areas.

CHILD GENDER



The Statistics

29.7% of callers are girls as against 64.3% of boy callers.

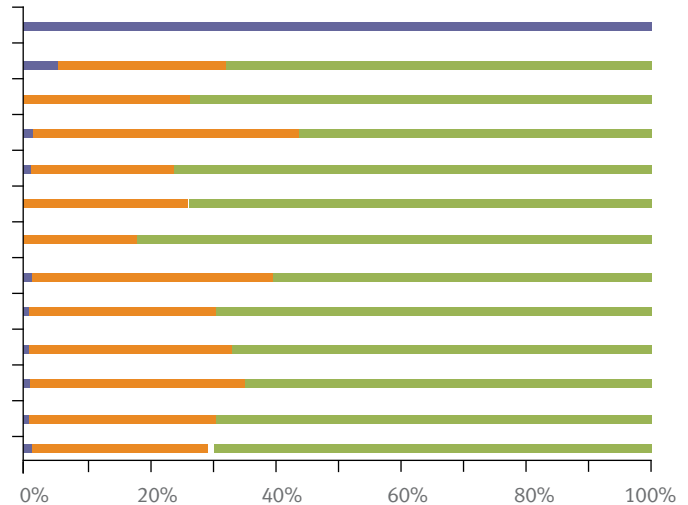
The Analysis

- Girls have less access to mechanisms of care and protection.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Customize outreach and awareness methodologies to reach the girl child.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION



The Statistics

Among 1098 callers, the girls have limited access to education. Access declines even further if they have disabilities.

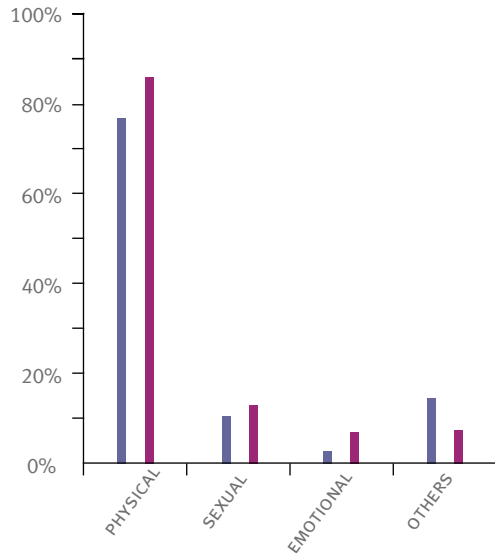
The Analysis

- If access is not denied, there is a greater chance of girls staying within the educational system.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Partner with the educational systems for increasing access and resources for girls.

ABUSE



The Statistics

- In two years, there has been a 15% increase in calls seeking rescue from physical abuse.
- While no official statistics on child abuse in India are available, only 6% of 1098 callers have sought intervention against sexual abuse.

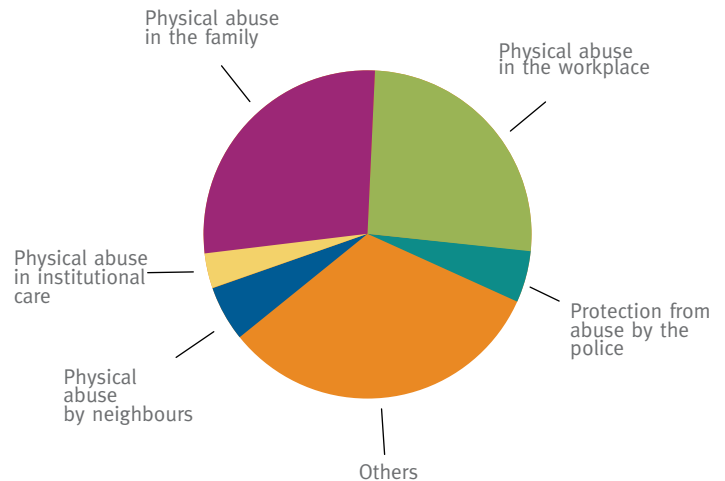
The Analysis

- Sexual abuse is under-reported in CHILDLINE.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Ramp up counselling skills.
- Develop issue-specific interventions to increase the reporting of sexual abuse.

RESCUE/ ABUSE: PHYSICAL ABUSE



The Statistics

- 35% of physical abuse cases reported to CHILDLINE take place within the family and neighbourhood.
- 30% of physical abuse cases are reported from workspaces.

The Analysis

- Traditional methods of disciplining children need to be challenged.
- Physical abuse of children in their workplaces links back to the CHILDLINE statistics of the highest calls for rescue that come from child labour.

CHILDLINE's Next Steps

- Design campaigns to address physical violence.
- Advocate for greater justice for abused children, with new laws and mechanisms to punish perpetrators.





Sam and Rizvi

The Next Five Years

The children of India are laying down new directions for CHILDLINE. The ChildNET data and the everyday experiences of CHILDLINE city teams are opening up new routes for the phone service that will focus on:

- Increasing advocacy with the government to ensure the full implementation of policy, legislation, plus child-friendly services for children.
- Extending 1098 coverage to rural areas to prevent family break-ups and economic migration of children and their families.
- Setting up services in high-endemic areas affected by child labour and child trafficking.
- Strengthening a gender focus to reach out to girls.
- Developing strategic alliances with people's movements and community-based groups working on livelihood and access issues. Developing local child rights volunteer bases that will work as community child protection watchdogs.
- Developing specialized, issue based programmes to reach 'invisible children' (political refugees, mentally-challenged children, victims of riots, victims of disaster and victims of sexual abuse).
- Claiming technology for India's children.

"Ration Nahin, Bhashan Nahin"

Samir, an associate of CHILDLINE and its partner organization YUVA, has started his own CSO. He first dialled 1098 many years back as a child living in the streets of Mumbai. Here's his story.

I grew up in a YUVA shelter, supporting myself as a waiter and rag picker. I also volunteered with CHILDLINE. I attended a programme on Dadar Station. Jeroo (Billimoria), Meghana (Sawant) and Prakash (Fernandes) told us about CHILDLINE. About 50 children attended that meeting. A few of us said we would help.

It was tough. We barely managed to maintain written records of calls to our call centre. It was a long time before I got comfortable with the computer. Slowly, we learnt accounts, case documentation. I taught myself, often by rewriting things over and over.

The first one month we got no salary. Then we got Rs. 700. I went back to school, finished Class VI, and quit.

I am now the oldest CHILDLINE team member at YUVA. I get better job offers from organizations looking for community workers, but working here reminds me of my past. That keeps me going. Most of the Allied Systems we work with are



Sam and Rizvi

now aware of CHILDLINE. But it hasn't led to any concrete change. There are no adequate shelters for children. More and more children with families are becoming CHILDLINE users. We must retain our focus on street children.

Even at CHILDLINE parties and open houses we talk so much about children's participation. But 1098 listens less to the older children. These days CHILDLINE partner organizations spend more money on parties and think a hundred times before spending on cases.

A few of us, friends from the streets, have started Pukaar, an organization for street youth. We recently received an award for youth social entrepreneurship.

Pukaar mobilizes street youth and gives them a voice. We are working on getting Personal Account Number (PAN) cards and ration cards for youth. We are promoting vaccinations and birth registrations for infants parented by street youth.

But there is a problem. We are all illiterate and we don't have permanent addresses. But we will figure out a way. We will be registering our group soon. We don't want the support of any organization. Not YUVA, not CHILDLINE.

Our motto is: "Ration nahin, bhaashan nahin. (No food, no sermons).

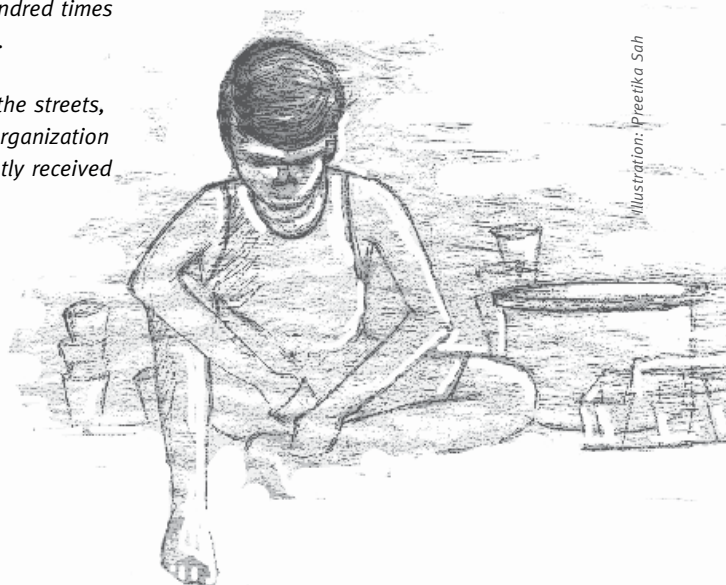


Illustration: Preetika Sah

Wiping India off the Paedophile's Map

The call that CHILDLINE was waiting for came finally.

In October 2001, a volunteer at the Anchorage shelter home in Colaba, Mumbai, dialled 1098. He reported sexual abuse of the boys by the owner of the home.

Duncan Grant, an ex-British Royal Navy member, set up Anchorage Shelter Home in 1995. His friend, Allen Waters, visited him frequently. Grant lived with a group of 25–30 children (mainly those working on the streets). Over time he set up two more shelters in the city.

Foreign tourists visited regularly and Anchorage boys would take them around the city. Grant, Waters, and their international network of friends gave expensive gifts to the boys.

Rumours were rife among street children about the abuse that went on inside Anchorage. Though CHILDLINE's radar had picked up disturbing signals, it had no hard evidence that could tip off an investigation against Grant and his associates.

Based on the call of a volunteer, and reports from a Mumbai-based activist, Meher Pestonjee, CIF filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against the management of Anchorage for sexual abuse of children. Maharukh Adenwala (a child rights activist and human rights lawyer) and Yug Chowdhary came on board as lawyer and advocate.

With this, CHILDLINE embarked on a tough, six-year journey that culminated in a landmark judgement against child sex abuse in India. Witnesses turned hostile. Grant and his associates were connected to powerful networks of money and power that went on to make many (successful) attempts to bribe the children.

In court, children accused CHILDLINE, Adenwala, Chowdhary, and special public prosecutor Vijay Nahar of coercing them to testify against Grant, Waters, and William Micheal D'Souza, the shelter's manager.

The police remained unmoved. And when funds were stopped for Anchorage after the case was filed, some sections of the local media questioned the ethics of CHILDLINE for bringing a shelter home to its knees.

On 18 March 2006, Additional Sessions Judge, PS Paranjpe, sentenced Grant and Waters to a maximum sentence of six years rigorous imprisonment for offences related to unnatural sex and abuse of children in the Anchorage home.

They were fined ₹20,000 each, of which ₹5 lakhs was directed for the rehabilitation of the two Anchorage boys whose testimony had turned the case.

The court held D'Souza guilty of aiding and abetting the crime and for assaulting the children. He was sentenced to three years of imprisonment.

For the first time, a foreign national had been extradited to stand trial in India. In every way, this was a historic verdict. Judge Paranjpe constituted a committee headed by Adenwala to look into the full rehabilitation of the children of Anchorage, and to prepare a scheme and present it to the principal judge of the Sessions Court.

For the CHILDLINE national partnership, the judgement went beyond the justice delivered to five children. It comes at a time of increasing sex tourism and paedophilia in India, and gives 1098 a steel spine for wiping paedophilia off the child protection map of India.



Tarun Chhabra



Tarun Chhabra

Lessons from Shastri Bhawan

The first impression of how Shastri Bhawan works can bewilder a newcomer. The largest seat of government funding for women and children's issues in India, it houses numerous ministries, including the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E).

Hundreds of civil servants seemingly hold up protocol and work large, complicated systems. Peons carry heaps of files from one cubicle to the next, sometimes on chairs with wheels for easy mobility.

To the uninitiated, this environment comes across as the exact opposite of inventive, dynamic social change. Wrong.

Over the years, feisty activists have learnt important lessons in Shastri Bhawan on systemic discipline and taking social movements to scale. CHILDLINE is one such organization.

Shastri Bhawan has been the main financial perch for CHILDLINE since 1999. Every year, the MSJ&E allocates Rs. 3 crores as grant-in-aid to CIF and CHILDLINE partners across India. The annual grant covers all operational, human, and technology costs of running the emergency phone service across India. It also includes start-up resources to launch the CHILDLINE service in 10 new cities.

In seven years, funding from MSJ&E has single-handedly scaled CHILDLINE to 70 cities in 22 states. In turn, CHILDLINE has demonstrated that a government programme can churn out high-impact statistics year after year, and decrease service costs proportionately.

For CHILDLINE, a good partnership with the government has been about good arithmetic. *“Hard, measurable results have taken us a long way, made us more credible, rooted us deeper into the government,”* says Nicole Menezes, Head Regional Resource Centre, CIF Delhi.

Every year, the Ministry's financial allocation to CHILDLINE translates into 1.9 million calls, 30,000 interventions and 60,000 children reached directly. Though the budget for CHILDLINE has remained, unchanged since 1998 (with no flex to even absorb inflation) the older, mature CHILDLINE's are collectively adding a million calls every year to ChildNET.

There have been many missteps, corrections, and learnings along the way.

CHILDLINE has had to balance between being the 'face of the government' and the 'voice of its civil society partners' at every child rights platform. On the one hand, it has represented, and, on the other hand, critiqued state performance in granting rights to every Indian child.

Keeping the two identities aligned has called for some terrific tightrope walking.

Consider the jugglery. The government lauded CHILDLINE in its 2000 report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and formalized the status of CHILDLINE in the Juvenile Justice Act of India (2000). Not coincidentally, CIF enrolled with the India Alliance for Child Rights at the same time. In 2003, the alliance produced the alternative citizen's report, *Every Right for Every Child*, along with 150 CSOs, movements and child rights institutions. The report, pointed to the various development lacunae in the government policy and identified the major holes in the security nets for the country's children. It asked the government to undertake more proactive steps to remedy this situation. **Managing such contradictions has given CHILDLINE clear insights into working effectively with the government.**



Tarun Chhabra



Illustration: Preetika Sah

Here are some quick snapshots of the slip-ups and the lessons learnt:

A year and a half into the partnership with the government, CHILDLINE hit red. It had no money. Cheques from the Ministry did not arrive. While CIF had prepared itself and its partners for delays and complicated paperwork, further delays could undo the 24 x 7 emergency tenor of the service.

Most CHILDLINE partners were financially established and were familiar with government programmes and schemes. They rallied around, ploughed in resources, and ran the service uninterrupted.

CHILDLINE could have raged, or simply limped along, without a clear plan for resolution. But the wisdom of the moment said: “Focus on the strengths of the government. Be conciliatory. Understand the logic of their systems and think through resolutions within it.”

From 2000, CIF went on a concerted fundraising drive, raising enough money to provide buffer loans to partners that typically had to wait inordinately for the release of their grants.

This was a small poultice, but a concrete start. CHILDLINE needed more solutions. It raised civil society contributions and looked for funds from within the CHILDLINE system. In recent years, the MoA between CHILDLINE partners and CIF asks the local partner to bring its own funding for the first year of CHILDLINE operations.

In an interesting turn of events, CIF discovered that close to 40 per cent of grant delays are prompted by late applications from CSOs, incompletely filled forms, and unclear presentation of information by CHILDLINE partners! CIF itself has defaulted on its government application processes.

Increasingly, CHILDLINE partners are being encouraged to build timeliness into their reports to the MSJ&E. Unfortunately, the grant delays continue, averaging a grant-waiting period of two years. A six-month lag from the time of sanction to the actual release of the money is considered normal.

This is a challenge that will not be met in a hurry.

Lessons Learnt and CHILDLINE's how-to...

Build financial buffers and safety nets into your plans.

Be upfront and inform new partners to the condition of financial stress. Formalize the partner's acceptance to this condition in the MoU.

Accept your part in causing the problem.

CHILDLINE was lodged within the Ministry's Integrated Street Children's Programme. In the beginning, the Programme was an uneasy fit for CHILDLINE. One, it focused only on street children while CHILDLINE's thrust was on all children. Two, as an ad-hoc programme, it did not enjoy the financial permanence of a 'scheme'.

"In the early days, rather than resist mismatches and fight on absolutes, we fell in with the government agenda with patience and good grace," Jeroo says. "But we did so keeping our vision for CHILDLINE intact. Hats off to the bureaucrats for allowing us the space to maintain that balance." The MSJ&E balanced out most of the precariousness over time. It raised CHILDLINE's budget progressively as the service scaled up.

In 1999, CIF was invited by the Ministry to evaluate and redirect the Integrated

Street Children's Programme. It found that only 20 per cent of the organizations were working directly with street children; most grant recipients were running non-formal education programmes for slum children. Technically, then, the money was not reaching the identified audience. The study also revealed that a large number of the children came mainly for the nutrition component that was attached to most of the programmes.

Post-evaluation, CIF tabled two options: The programme could bring the focus back onto street children, in which case the bulk of the existing CSOs would have to withdraw from the initiative. Or, it could broaden its mandate to provide integrated services to all children in need of care and protection. The Ministry took the second route.

New metrics reflecting the programmatic shift were drawn up, especially with relation to enrolment numbers, and the quality of education and rehabilitation. The expansion of the audience profile from street children to the inclusion of all children in need of care and protection resonated completely with CHILDLINE's vision.

CIF was appointed as the monitoring agency for the new Integrated Street Children's Programme of the MSJ&E. This additional role gave CIF a second window for deepening its relations with the

government. It opened up a good catchment area of potential CHILDLINE partners – organizations that were until then only recipients of the Integrated Street Children's Programme.

Lessons Learnt and CHILDLINE's how-to...

Balance flexibility with determination; remain stubborn about your vision, even as you adapt to new systems.

Perform, despite the barriers in the system, until you are seen as credible. You could be invited to redirect the system!

For four years after the formalization of CIF, its leadership team worked late nights with senior bureaucrats, averaging 100 hours a month in Delhi. The administrative contours of the partnership had to be drawn. CHILDLINE service norms and standards had to be set. Call targets had to be nailed. Crises had to be tamed. And, most importantly, grant applications of CHILDLINE partners had to be processed.

"We used to travel to Delhi every month with sacks of applications," remembers Prakash Fernandes, who has been a core member of CIF since the days of its launch in TISS. *"While Jeroo worked with the directors, we'd park ourselves in the sections office, helping the clerks process the applications."*

“Mr Bordia and Ms Das, senior bureaucrats in the Ministry, would keep educating us,” Jeroo remembers. “They would tell the CIF team, ‘That’s precisely how you should not present the matter before the Minister.’ And then they would help us position the pitch,” she continues.

In 2002, CIF set up a Delhi unit in order to be right on the spot to ensure that government files moved and that grants were released on time.

The Integrated Programme for Street Children had one dealing hand to process 300 CSO applications, twice a year. Menezes, CIF’s liaison with the government, realized quickly that her first task would be to support the clerk in organizing all the information in the grant application format before it trundled through the sanctions process. She steeped herself in the intricacies of standard grant formats and clerical processes, and taught herself to decode the language of the bureaucracy. She read everything she could lay her hands on to understand every rule in the book.

The hard work paid off. In four years, CIF Delhi has covered significant ground. From managing CHILDLINE grant applications, CIF is now serving the national network as the translator of government language and processes, building better understanding by CHILDLINE partners of the government system.

“This role shift takes us a step forward, from being implementers of a government initiative to a value-adding partner of the government,” says Kajol Menon, Executive Director, CIF.

Lessons Learnt and CHILDLINE’s how-to...

**Base yourself where the government is.
Be there on the spot.**

**Believe that government systems can be
clean and that they will work.**

**Learn from government officials at all
levels, especially those who deliver the
first level of clerical work.**

**Build knowledge of, and functional
excellence in the team about government
procedures, protocol, and the administrative
processes.**

Senior bureaucrats who have shaped CHILDLINE agree that partnering with the government brings uncontested credibility to any social change initiative. But government systems are not the most competent in operationalizing ideas, schemes, and programmes.

“The government implementation systems at the grassroots is very limited,” notes Bordia who served as a Joint Secretary in MSJ&E at the time when 1098 became a

government initiative. “I saw again and again that the greater the direct role of the government in the running of the scheme, the less effective it became.”

Asha Das, Secretary, MSJ&E from 1998 to 2001, concurs. *“In India, the government cannot implement social change by itself,” she says. “For example, care and protection of children cannot be the job of the government alone. Where are the resources and the channels to reach the bottom of the barrel?”*

For this and other reasons, civil servants scout around for grassroots organizations to deliver government programmes and schemes on the ground. There is a hard thrust on operations, implementation, and delivery. Funds flow from the government to the CSOs. Community groups are monitored and put on accountability tests. A combination of these factors and a history of asymmetrical relationships have led the bureaucracy to traditionally view CSOs as implementers, but not as real partners.

What, then, has been CIF’s trajectory in tipping this relationship? *“We have had to be at it, constantly building up our relationship with bureaucrats on a one-on-one basis,”* says Menon.

Ownership of CHILDLINE among bureaucrats has been high at most times. *“Frankly, we owned CHILDLINE so fully, we didn’t see it as a partnership,”* says JS Kochher, from his experience as an Director with the MSJ&E. *“For us it was a Ministry initiative. It was our initiative.”*

In an impersonal, cautious, and structured environment, CHILDLINE has seen bureaucrats at their most progressive at one minute, and their most conservative at the next, switching roles to strategize and help CHILDLINE seize opportunities.

Consider the progressive streak: *“We had big plans when we launched CHILDLINE,”* says Bordia, recalling the start-up days. *“We wanted to hire people with the best professional skills in the field and pay them commensurate, high-end professional salaries.”*

And then the plans ran into a conservative wall. *“Belatedly, we realized that the Integrated Street Children’s Programme did not have space for a separate Foundation,”* says Bordia. *“We had to deal with the Planning Commission, the Finance Controller, and various bureaucrats and systems at every level. We had to work hard to justify an entity (CIF) that would not work directly with children. A lot of our vision got watered down with this back and forth.”*

However, on a final audit, CHILDLINE reports that its relationship with the government has remained largely asymmetrical.

According to Dr Armaity Desai, CHILDLINE mentor who also served as Director, University Grants Commission, CIF has yet to reach that tipping point. *“The government has recognized our operational excellence,”* she says. *“But we have more*

work to do before the government sees us as equal partners and facilitators.”

The extra miles that CHILDLINE has to walk will have to be in the three critical directions – of deepening its relationship at all levels in the Ministry; being perceived more as a value-adding unit to the government; and in raising resources to match the government’s financial contribution. *“As we become less of a liability, we become more of a partner,”* she says.



Illustration: Preetika Sah



THE BEST OF INDIAN BUREAUCRACY

Despite the transience of their tenures, Secretaries, Joint Secretaries, Directors and Under Secretaries have left behind much anecdotal evidence of their enthusiasm for CHILDLINE.

- In early 2000, Atul Chaturvedi, Director at the MSJ&E, initiated CHILDLINE's partnership with the National Institute of Social Defense, an autonomous department of the government. In one move, the partnership leapfrogged CHILDLINE's National Initiative for Child Protection (NICP), and rolled out countrywide training on child rights and protection with the Allied Systems.

In 2000, he went on to anchor an international conference on phone protection systems for children in need of care and protection. He backed the conference with astonishing energy. The conference served as the launch pad for Child Helplines International (CHI).

Later, when he was transferred to the Planning Commission, Chaturvedi opened up channels for CIF to work on a comprehensive child protection scheme. The scheme is a work in progress and will be considered before the 11th Planning Commission.

- Khaleeq Ahmad, an Under Secretary, was rigorous in examining every CHILDLINE file. Every time the Integrated Finance Department of the Ministry raised a question or sought more information regarding any CHILDLINE file, Ahmad would open the voluminous tomes on Government Finance Regulation, flip through the pages and write detailed, sound explanations to the department, making a logical case for the file to go through.

- AP Singh recounts an all-time favourite incident: *"The most conservative element in the entire government is the Integrated Finance Department (IFD), the wing of the*

Finance Ministry that sits in every ministry. Our involvement with CHILDLINE aroused the curiosity of Shalendra Pandey, the then Director, IFD in the MSJ&E. One day, he stepped out of his office – unusual for someone of his stature – and decided to pay CHILDLINE a surprise visit. At that time, the CHILDLINE office was housed in a small room in Nana Chowk, Mumbai, and was bereft of furniture. The team had to scramble to organize a chair for him. After a quick financial discipline check and a run through the records, he took to the streets with the CHILDLINE team on an 'outreach'."

Pandey returned to his office, a convert. He confessed to Singh later that before the CHILDLINE visit, he could not have imagined any NGO recipient of government funds working out of a no-furniture office.

As this publication goes into print, CHILDLINE has been transferred from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E) to become an initiative of the newly formed Ministry of Woman and Child Development (MWCD).



More than the Sum of Individual Parts

In 2005–2006, CHILDLINE was ringing in 70 cities.

Its partnership network stretched to Kashmir (in quick response to the earthquake in October 2005), and consolidated in the Andaman Islands (post-tsunami, a new child protection approach that suited local tribal traditions was adopted). At last count, the roster of CHILDLINE's partners included 150 CSOs.

CHILDLINE is run in 22 states by 'partner organizations', a range of large, medium, and small child rights agencies. Locally, they run the full CHILDLINE service, weaving 1098 into their organizational canvases. Nationally, they make up the spine of CHILDLINE.

In interviews with CHILDLINE Directors¹, we asked them how they would best describe CHILDLINE's partnership model to a newcomer. For most, visual metaphors of a multi-point, multi-layered web came easily:

"It's intricate and complex, yet simple and structured... like a spider's web," says Rajesh Bhat, Director, Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), a CHILDLINE partner in Ahmedabad.

"Let's call the partnership the Child Protect-Net of India," says Rajib Halder, Director, Prayas, a Delhi-based CHILDLINE partner. *"An integrated, inclusive system that spreads out to get more partners into its fold."*

"CHILDLINE is a dynamic mesh with multiple points of contact with children, youth volunteers, academic organizations, and other progressive alliances," comments Hasina Kharbi, Director, IMPULSE NGO Network, a CHILDLINE partner in Shillong. *"Every contact point in the net has the potential of opening out to new partnership layers."*

For many others, CHILDLINE is a 'network of networks'. In CHILDLINE parlance, the partnership model has a distinct name – the Brand Add-On model.

"CHILDLINE's existence is an add-on," explains Jeroo. *"It's a branded service with one logo, one colour scheme, one number. The service taps into organizations that are rights driven, not donor driven, and strengthens child protection programmes and infrastructure that already exist."*

¹ A nomenclature used widely in the CHILDLINE system for Directors of CSOs that run the CHILDLINE service

According to Inu Annie Stephen, member, CIF, the Brand Add-On model is simple to explain and attracts CSOs quickly. *“It’s about telling partners; ‘You have the expertise and the experience on the ground. We are bringing you a brand, i.e., a phone service with standardized norms. We are depending on your expertise to run the service. You can use CHILDLINE in any way to strengthen your own organization. And we will continuously add-on to your team’s skills.’”*

The Brand Add-On partnership is characterized by a unique set of traits:

- Every unit (partner) is decentralized and self-managed. But taken together, all units are integrated into one common vision and one national service.
- Partners are accountable to and inter-dependent on each other. Their roles are laid out in all partnership documents. They offer feedback to each other, and seek feedback from children. They speak in a common voice at all advocacy and negotiation tables.
- Partners juggle multiple identities. While they own a common national brand – CHILDLINE, the Government of India programme – locally, they use their city avatars thus: Mumbai CHILDLINE, or

Ahmedabad CHILDLINE, especially during brand promotion drills, fundraising events, or even serious quarrels with the city JJ system. All CSOs come on board as partners of the government, rather than those of one organization, ensuring that organizational identities are not threatened.

- All partners are guided by common service standards and norms, though partners have the freedom to change the map of their operations and re-engineer intervention strategies, based on one phone call or a study of their area’s CRC fault lines.
 - While CHILDLINE may be just one of the many child rights initiatives run by a partner CSO, it is highly leveraged. A majority of Directors report optimal integration of 1098 into other programmes managed by them.
 - All partners bring a special out-of-the-box resourcefulness to CHILDLINE, just as 1098 brings them credibility¹. Partners nurture CHILDLINE, just as CHILDLINE improves their access and the impact of their work with disadvantaged children.
- Bottom line: Brand Add-On members delight in working through a decentralized yet integrated, local yet national, one-brand-with-multiple-identities initiative.**

A helicopter-view of the CHILDLINE Brand Add-On partnership grabs attention on two fronts: **First, the scale of operations. Second, the leadership and operational expertise that runs through the 1098 ecosystem.**

Consider this: Every day 1,500 social workers, mentored by 150 child rights leaders, operate 70 CHILDLINE call centres, whirr up 55 support service bases, dock 6,000 calls, and reach out to 2,000 children. In addition, they work with the media and child protection systems, counsel families, conduct open houses, undertake repatriations, sensitize Allied Systems, build consensus with each other, and coordinate with CIF on any regular working day.

Execution, then, is key to the CHILDLINE partnership, not just in terms of how partners and CIF implement the 1098 service, but also in terms of how goals are set, teams inspired, conflicts resolved, and diversity managed.

We’ve analyzed the execution systems of the Brand Add-On model on the framework of the 5 Ss: Strategy, Structure, Systems, Styles of Leadership, and Skills².

¹ In a CIF-IMRB evaluation conducted in 2003, a majority of CHILDLINE partners overwhelmingly reported that being part of a Government of India initiative strengthens their credibility and opens access to local CRC systems.

² Based on McKinsey’s 7S framework of organizational management.

STRATEGY

The Brand Add-On model is organized around four strategic principles. These breathe oxygen into the 1098 service flow and are the bedrock of all CHILDLINE work. Together, they give the Brand Add-On model its innate character and voice.

The strategic principles are:

Brand Add-On taps into the wealth of its partners – children, street youth, and the child rights sector. Instead of focusing on what's broken, Brand Add-on builds on the inventiveness, passion, and leadership of the child rights sector. *Hello CHILDLINE*, the 1098 newsletter, is an interesting sampler of how CHILDLINE city teams make metaphorical gold every month out of the most desperate situations and crises.

CHILDLINE also taps into the intrinsic ability of children for changing their worlds. It has turned 1098 users into deliverers and promoters of the service.

The national partnership today is strengthened by an organic peer support base of 10,000 street youth. They are the face of CHILDLINE, on city streets, at railway platforms, bus stations, marketplaces reaching out to new kids in town before a tout or pimp gets hold of them.

Brand Add-On more than adds on. It catalyses.

Partners sign on. Street youth come on board. New relationships are forged. Then the city CHILDLINE lets 1098 loose on the juvenile justice system, the police, the health system, educational departments, municipalities, corporates, the media... everyone, moving each one of them to claim the children of their cities.

Every point in CHILDLINE's service chain – from outreach, promotion, distribution, to delivery – carries the potential of 'catalysing entire cities into child protection teams'.

The partnership is more than the sum of its individual parts.

CHILDLINE is a catch all partnership. It does not stop at relationships, sealed through MoAs. It trickles down through layers within layers of the Brand Add-On net. And multiplies resources and gains for children.

Explains Father Jose, Director, Don Bosco Ashalayam, Delhi: *"In addition to Delhi, 25 Don Bosco Centres from different parts of the country have partnered with CHILDLINE. For us, CHILDLINE becomes a double partnership bond.*

If we have to repatriate a child from one part of the country to another, we will, ofcourse, move the CHILDLINE network.

But in addition, we will also get the full Don Bosco system cracking; we will plug into our national Missing Children's website. And we will pull out financial resources from everywhere."

Brand Add-On is affirmative.

Rather than fix blame, CHILDLINE fixes problems. In the event of an intervention slip, a drop in quality levels, or a fall in call numbers, Brand Add-On turns to dialogue. It does not deprecate individuals or organizations.

STRUCTURE

The Brand Add-On partnership structure has clear, logical positions for all partners. A partner CSO is integrated into the city CHILDLINE grid based on:

- the nature of its work
- its experience and skill base
- the infrastructural facilities available to it

Each position comes with specific roles and responsibilities. The structure is non-hierarchical.

In every city, CHILDLINE partners are divided into the following categories: the Nodal Organization, the Collaborative Organization, the Support Organization and the Resource Organization. Each brings a unique value proposition.

The Nodal Organization is the academic body that researches and critiques the child rights environment in the city.

It anchors CHILDLINE in the start-up months and facilitates the city CHILDLINE in a non-competitive, non-threatening manner. Training government and other mainstream systems on child rights issues fall within its mandate.

Perhaps the most critical role of the Nodal partner is anchoring the City Advisory Board (CAB), the policy-forming body for every city CHILDLINE. CAB comprises members from all systems of local governance, the media and other CHILDLINE partners.

An effective Nodal organization – such as Roshni Nilaya, School of Social Work, Mangalore – works as a ‘community college’ and opens up large bases of student and faculty volunteers for CHILDLINE.

The Collaborative Organization is the quick-response, experienced grassroots outfit that runs the CHILDLINE call centres.

It is equipped with two phone lines and one computer. It is typically, a child’s first entry point into the CHILDLINE system in the city.

The Collaborative Organization receives and documents calls, and hooks the child into local systems of care and protection. It walks her through the full rescue-to-

rehabilitation service continuum. It teams up with the Support Organization to follow each case until it is closed.

The Support Organization is a hands-on, grassroots organization that is grounded in such specialized areas of work as health, trafficking, education, human rights, disability, education, and labour. In most cases, it has formidable practical experience in making the justice systems work for the marginalized. A Support Organization responds on a high urgency basis to cases referred to it by the Collaborative Organization. It follows up and documents cases. It feeds CHILDLINE’s call catchment through extensive outreach into the local hangouts of children. It redirects most children who come through its doors to CHILDLINE.

The Resource Organization provides specialized inputs to calls made to 1098.

It could be an activist or research and advocacy body, a service provider such as a hospital, a development media initiative, a legal aid cell – any credible outfit that can be plugged into, for purposes of intervention. It does not draw resources from CHILDLINE, but it is not out of the CHILDLINE accountability loop.

Transparency moves the Brand Add-On partnership structure. A CHILDLINE partner has to open up to multiple levels of accountability and reviews – both formal and informal.

It is a structure where anyone in the Nodal – Collaborative—Support—Resource grid can critique services and demand improved performance. This attracts organizations that are transparent, that have a strong learning orientation, and that are open to receiving feedback from the outside world.

During its due diligence process, CIF finds it difficult to identify child rights agencies that can match CHILDLINE’S high credibility standards.

On the other hand, very often, small organizations that do pass CHILDLINE’s criteria often cannot muster start-up funds for launching the service. For this reason, CHILDLINE’s structure stands weakened at places and lacks a Nodal organization in many cities.

In critical areas, with few eligible CSOs, partners have to perform double roles. In Vijayawada, the Forum for Child Rights serves as the Nodal and Collaborative organizations. For five years, Bal Sakha in Patna functioned as the lone CHILDLINE partner, handling cases from across a state that has the highest migration statistics in the country.

Everybody agrees that the dilution of the partnership structure can weaken Brand Add-On. But most are aware that often the choice is between flexibility in the partnership structuring, or not running 1098 at all.

SYSTEMS

Every year, more than 100 CHILDLINE coordinators and CIF team members meet to roll dialogue, learning and fun into the annual Coordinator's Meet – a platform for re-energizing CHILDLINE coordinators – professional social workers who manage the 1098 operations in their organizations and cities.

In casual conversations, many report that the annual Coordinator's Meets are a job 'perk,' an opportunity to travel and participate in a platform for listening, learning, and celebrating.

In a similar manner, CHILDLINE Directors meet at least once a year at a national

workshop. The Directors' Meets are designed to identify a common annual vision and build annual operations around common themes. The meetings double as spaces for giving feedback and institutionalizing key decisions and change projects.

The Brand Add-On model's systems are based on: building and reinforcing a common vision; dialoguing to resolve conflicts; and listening to become a learning community. Managing the Brand Add-On partnership is an everyday business. Anchored mainly by CIF, critical partnership transactions are kept simple, informal, and on a one-on-one basis.

This is how it works: Every city is assigned a manager from CIF, who is a peer to her city CHILDLINE team. Every year, she makes at least two trips to her city to facilitate self-assessment of the CHILDLINE teams there. She also manages all administrative transactions with partner CSOs to expedite their government grants.

The visits keep the CIF manager grounded. They feed her radar with new information on the training needs and challenges of her team. In addition, she is in daily touch with her city partners, fired on SMS, chats, emails, and long phone calls.

Managing the diversity among partners, handling the dynamics between city CHILDLINES, and taking people along is a

huge challenge that stretches CIF to its creative best. But what underlines its work with partners is a real commitment to helping them be on top of their city situations.

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Every CHILDLINE Director brings a distinct leadership style that resonates with the diversity of execution approaches within the 1098 partnership.

Consider the variety: There are the hands-on activist Directors who engage personally in every intervention call and know every detail of every case. They will threaten the Allied System with satyagraha. They will burn up the phone lines, wake up CAB members, stay up all night in the government hospital, or at the police station because a child is in a critical condition or is at risk of being trafficked.

In contrast there are Directors who are detached from the everyday CHILDLINE operations. They see themselves as mentors to their city CHILDLINE. They give space and flexibility to their team, and focus on building their competencies and career paths within CHILDLINE. They delegate, but never hesitate to step in when needed. Some CHILDLINE Directors are sharp strategists, who bring uncanny insights for positioning brand 1098. Others are networkers who open new relationship doors for CHILDLINE.



Illustration: Preetika Sah

Then there are the wise critics who will lay down all the caveats before CHILDLINE can say yes to an innovation.

And, there are finally, the nay-sayers—the Directors who perennially play the devil's advocate. They are inevitably terribly upset with the treatment meted out to the CHILDLINE leadership.

They studiously refrain from attending CHILDLINE meetings. But when sought out, they bring remarkable insights for 1098's second curve.

Regardless of their leadership styles, each one of them lives CHILDLINE.

Directors bring diversity alive in all CHILDLINE meetings, pulling out multiple lenses to examine all aspects of a problem and adopting various enquiry modes for every decision-making process.

The flip side: unresolved arguments, unfinished statements, and thorny debates. But at the end of the day, they keep CHILDLINE grounded.

At another level, the national CHILDLINE leadership is poised to provide invaluable mentoring to the next generation of 1098 leaders.

SKILLS

A majority of CHILDLINE Directors have told us that raising the skill levels in the system is perhaps the make-or-break step that will move CHILDLINE from a service partnership to a learning community.

Unfortunately, trainings and workshops are completely dependent on funds. Based on the severity of the drought, the number of trainings vary from as many as six in a year in one city to none at all. The CHILDLINE annual report indicates that there were as many as 200 training workshops across India in 2004. But there has been no systematic analysis of their impact on the conceptual and practical skill levels of CHILDLINE teams.

THE POWER OF BRAND ADD-ON

March 2006. 8. pm on a weekend. CIF's South Regional Resource Centre received a call from a Tamil Nadu-based community organization:

"Madam, we have launched CHILDLINE in our town!" exulted the voice at the other end.

"But do we know you?" the CIF representative asked, nervously.

"No", replied the caller. *"But we want to invite you to visit us urgently. We've read your manuals and followed every rule. Come and see all the outreach work we've done, check our credibility, talk to the children, the Allied Systems, and sanction us the 1098 number. Please do all this urgently."*

The CIF representative took a moment to respond.

"Madam, don't be silent. Please hurry. We are ready to roll," the caller appealed, capturing the spirit and urgency of Brand Add-On.

BRAND ADD-ON: THE IRRITANTS

While conducting research for the book, we talked extensively with the Directors of organizations that run the service about the one key challenge to the 1098 partnership: the government's delay in sanctioning funds.

CHILDLINE Directors and Coordinators are constantly wrestling with this issue. It is the top question at national, regional, and city CHILDLINE meetings. It is the most frequently used opening line in conversations between CIF team members and CHILDLINE centres.

This is what they told us:

Praveen Nair, Director, Salaam Baalak Trust, New Delhi

The Ministry gives our CHILDLINE Rs. 5 lakhs every year. Frankly, our real annual expenditure on all CHILDLINE activities is Rs. 10 lakhs. We're located next to the railway and bus stations. We come in touch with so many children who need repatriation.

Our annual repatriation budget is Rs. 39,000. Of that we spend Rs. 20,000 in just referring and producing children before child welfare committees! Even if we're in the red, we can't say 'no' to a child. So we draw money from wherever we can.

Anuradha Sahastrabudhe, Dynana Devi, Pune

CHILDLINE is a service that we've built with great trouble and it's given us credibility. We'll never stop CHILDLINE. But when funds get delayed, frustration and demoralization set in.

The government funds don't account for hardware wear and tear. Our furniture has broken down, salaries are low, with no holidays built into the service norms. BPOs are luring away professionals with the qualifications that we look for in team coordinators. CIF and Pune CHILDLINE are now talking of raising local resources in Pune.

Rajesh Bhat, Ahmedabad Study Action Group, Ahmedabad

We're always two payment instalments behind. But we aren't worried because we know that at some time the money will come. What we ourselves generally put into the CHILDLINE budget is one and a half times the Ministry budget. We recently spent more than Rs. 12,000 on the medical treatment of a child electrocuted at the railway station. We raised the money somehow.

Baby Paul, Joint Voluntary Action for Legal Alternatives, Waynad

We haven't received funds for one and a half years. We take loans, borrow money from friends, advance cash from other programmes, raise local resources, even

walk into the Ministry demanding release. But there has to be a real will within the bureaucracy to advance cash to us and keep the emergency nature of the service alive.

Father Jose, Don Bosco Ashalayam, Delhi

It's difficult for our paraprofessionals to work for Rs. 3,500 per month. We contribute to their salary from our organizational budgets.

To make matters worse, there are delays in the money coming in. The practice of giving advances to CHILDLINE from other programmes creates grave problems in internal auditing systems.

Sreelekha Ray, Voluntary Health Association Tripura, Agartala

We've been running CHILDLINE for three years. So far, we've received money for just two months. CIF has been chasing our two-year old pending files in the Ministry.

We contribute more than Rs. 2.5 lakhs to CHILDLINE every year from the resources that we raise from running a girls' hostel and from advancing loans from the organization. Our senior staff members haven't been paid for a few months now.

Frankly, if I wasn't fortunate to have premises that I could rent out, I wouldn't have been able to support any CHILDLINE team member.

What's In It For Me?

Why have child rights organizations said yes to 1098?

Why do they continue to accept the many contradictions and struggles of a Brand Add-On partnership?

What has been the real value addition of Brand Add-On for CHILDLINE partners?

How has CHILDLINE accelerated the impact of its partners?

Here's what the partners had to say »

Achinto Bhattacharya, City Level Plan of Action for Street and Working Children, Kolkata

At the time that CHILDLINE came to Kolkata, our networks were already working with 80,000 disadvantaged children. We were looking for innovations that would increase our citywide coverage. CHILDLINE seemed to be the answer. We could see how the phone service would be a critical access mechanism and how it could speed up the work of all 44 partners we were engaged with at that time.

The technology innovation was exciting. We have had a helpline before—an AIDS helpline—but it didn't have opportunities of human contact between the caller and the receiver.

Jacinta D'Souza, Roshni Nilaya, School of Social Work, Mangalore

Our faculty has always been active in action research studies on child labour issues, with many being involved with the Coalition Against Child Labour. Our senior faculty members are on the Juvenile Justice Board. Another has established a child labour school in partnership with the district government. In 1999–2000, we conducted a district-wide survey of child labour under which we booked many local perpetrators. So lots was already happening.

When CHILDLINE came, it embraced all our spontaneous work on child rights

with a structure. We read the CHILDLINE brochures and said, 'Oh! Here's a focus!' CHILDLINE had another huge appeal for us. It opened our eyes to the most extreme cases of violations that had been happening right under our nose in Mangalore city.

Rajesh Bhat, Ahmedabad Study Action Group, Ahmedabad

Over 20 years, Sarjan had moved from providing children educational opportunities to delivering services for them. When we found out about CHILDLINE, we thought that it would be a useful progression from services to rights-based work. CHILDLINE gave us the opportunity for breaking the stagnancy within Sarjan/ASAG, moving to a rights-based service, and reinventing 20 years of our work with children.

Baby Paul, Joint Voluntary Action for Legal Alternatives, Waynad

When we started work with tribal children, our main question was how best to deliver services to the children. We started with an alternative education programme for non-school-going tribal children. In 2002, I met the CHILDLINE Trivandrum coordinator at a conference. The idea of CHILDLINE interested me and I invited CIF to visit us and consider launching the service in our interior areas. When CHILDLINE started here, we got lots of test calls from children. CHILDLINE gave our child rights mandate a focus and a strategic vision. We had always been committed to child rights

work but when CHILDLINE came, it became a powerful channel, a CRC canvas that integrated all our previous activities. In many ways, CHILDLINE gave us our organizational identity.

The analysis for this chapter could not have happened without the hard-hitting, plain-speaking interviews with CHILDLINE Directors. Their ideas and comments have shaped our thinking, for which we are grateful. This spirit of continuous feedback has been essential to shaping the CHILDLINE ideology.



Illustration: Preetika Sah





Making Children Everybody's Business

CHILDLINE has broadened the agenda for itself in 10 years.

It has moved from responding to children already in crisis to preventing them from falling through the cracks; from offering reactive child protection services to building a local child protection index.

Sitamarhi a district in north Bihar sits at the heart of CHILDLINE's new trajectory. What sets this district apart is the stark absence of even one male child older than 10 years. *Where are the children?* Employed in the zari-making sweatshops that dot the country.

In March 2006, CIF teamed up with Pratham, a national education initiative, and the Patna-based East-West Education Society, to launch CHILDLINE in Sitamarhi. The aim is to have 1098 ringing in the neighbouring districts of Kishanganj, Purnea, and Darbhanga by December 2006. Taken together, the four districts have the worst human development indicators in India.

While telephony exists in the district, landline connections are unreliable. Efforts are on to plug 1098 into all local mobile phone networks. The vision for CHILDLINE's Sitamarhi model is to gradually reduce unsafe migration, get local communities to build their social infrastructure, and set up initiatives that will link child rights to livelihood issues.

"Our biggest growth challenge is to get to the districts of the country by 2015," says Chitrakala Acharya, Head, Services, CIF. "We will have to start with areas where the human development ratings are the lowest, where rights violations are the highest, where children and their families are most vulnerable to trafficking, and where the child sex ratio is skewed."

Nawshir Mirza, Board Member, CIF, agrees. Indeed, he is ruthlessly candid when he states that so far CHILDLINE has won all the easy battles. *"There are vast areas in interior India that we haven't even penetrated yet,"* he says.

So far CHILDLINE has been an urban service, tweaked around creatively by partners such as JVALA in Waynad, Kerala, which have made it work in heavily forested rural belts. Their experiences will go a long way in sculpting 'Rural 1098'.

"CHILDLINE needs many new contours now to adapt to rural resources, players, and systems," says Kajol Menon. "As we see it, the district model of CHILDLINE will organize local communities and partners to start-up child-centred community development programmes. It will create social value and community leaders in the districts."

For most CHILDLINE partners, this shift has been made at a good time. Not just because 1098 is ready to develop its second service curve, but also because Brand Add-On is ready for new roles and rhythms within the partnership.

As CHILDLINE Directors mark 10 years of 1098, the biggest buzz is about how they will move from implementing a service to working in groups to create the second generation of CHILDLINE innovations.

At the annual Directors' Meeting in February 2005, the idea that they take on the mandate of re-imagining CHILDLINE was floated. The Directors organized into three task forces to put CHILDLINE into new orbits in the coming years: the networking and advocacy group, the interventions unit, and the partnership, technology and coverage restructuring group.

For over three months, CHILDLINE Directors analysed, consulted and presented strategies on their appointed themes. They put in long hours of work and jointly evolved new agendas, new approaches, and new contexts for CHILDLINE. These deliberations mapped CHILDLINE's new programmatic thrusts.

The new directions were offered in the spirit of the principle, 'Preserve the core. Stimulate Progress'.¹

The first step was to consolidate the 10-year gains of CHILDLINE, shed dead wood where needed, and energize the teams. Only then would CHILDLINE take on new mandates and new models.

The task forces called for:

- **New coverage plans** to take 1098 to the remotest areas.
- **Raising of service standards and practices** by focusing on quality and finetuning service processes.
- **Systems for celebrating the performance of CHILDLINE teams**, including developing career paths.
- **Re-imagining all the various CHILDLINE initiatives** that have evolved from 1996 (like the National Initiative for Child Protection), and making sure that all initiatives mesh into one central CHILDLINE strategy.
- **Bringing on an array of new technologies** within CHILDLINE that will lower the per-call cost.

¹ James C. Collins, Jerry I. Porras, *Built To Last*, Harper Business, New York, 1997, pp.80-90

The Directors reflected the most on ways to deepen children's participation. For them it was critical that CHILDLINE revisit how children could be brought back to owning and reclaiming the service.

Sure, CHILDLINE teams listen to the children every day. But the task forces recommended accelerated partnership and participation of children, so that children could once again shape their instrument of change, even as CHILDLINE goes into its second curve.

Indeed, the greater the participation of children, the stronger the advocacy ability of CHILDLINE. 1098 serves up hundreds of testimonials by children everyday on the state of the country's child protection system.

"At UNICEF, our biggest concern was the lack of updated data that could give us a full national profile of at-risk children in one shot," says Gerry Pinto, Trustee, Butterflies who served as the programme officer of UNICEF's child protection unit from 1981 to 2005. In 1998, he had played a key role in building CHILDLINE's partnership with UNICEF.

"CHILDLINE throws up mind-boggling advocacy possibilities," says Pinto. *"In Delhi alone, the data that CHILDLINE gets could be analyzed every week, and the voices of children put out as weekly news of what our kids are demanding from the country."*

"Think about it. The data for even one day could be something like: '10 children called CHILDLINE today and said they wanted to go to school.' CHILDLINE could put out that information with a question: 'Now will the government please tell us where the hell are the schools?' "

Undeniably, CHILDLINE is a forum for children's voices. Its 2020 vision is to convert these voices into campaigns, policies, laws, directives, books, stories, films, poetry, jingles, songs, art, theatre... anything that will move every adult to understand that their worlds are interconnected with the lives of children around them.



Illustration: Preetika Sah

The rights of children
is everybody's business.
Yours. And mine.

WILL CHILDLINE RING IN 2020?

In the recent past, private telecom service providers have entered the market, stirring up competition for government-owned telecommunications. PCO owners are joining hands with private telecom conglomerates because deals are more lucrative here.

This new scenario has impacted CHILDLINE such that call statistics have begun to fall.

Why? Because there's a good chance that you can't connect to 1098 through your private service provider. And for sure, the call will not be free. Since 1098 is a category two number designated by the government, it is not mandatory for private telecom players to offer connectivity.

For CHILDLINE's primary customer base—mainly street and working children—access and cost are of fundamental importance.

CHILDLINE has decided to adopt a two-pronged approach to counter this:

First, one-on-one consultations with the large telecommunications companies to get them to absorb the cost of dialing 1098 into their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) agenda.

Second, advocacy with TRAI to evolve a policy that makes not only 1098 but also other four-digit helplines mandatory and free for all service providers.

CHILDLINE 1098 NIGHT & DAY

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a light-colored t-shirt, is holding a red telephone receiver to his ear. He is looking down at the receiver. The telephone is a red, multi-line model with a coiled cord. The background is a wall with light-colored tiles and some dark wires. The number 1098 is overlaid in large red digits in the top right corner.

1098

CHILDLINE : NIGHT & DAY

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Copy editor : Malini Sood

Published by : CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF)

Cover picture by Sam Hollenshead

This publication is supported by Plan International.



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First Published: June 2006

