



BREADS
Bangalore Rural Educational
and Development Society

SLICE

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Child Assistance Centre
BANGALORE RURAL EDUCATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

03

**Don Bosco
on the Streets**

05

**Street Presence:
A Child's Safety Net**

07

**Street Presence:
The Power of the Person**

08

**Street Presence:
A Preventive Presence**

11

**Calendar &
News**



BREADS Bangalore

www.breadsbangalore.org

START





Director's Message

FR GEORGE PS
Executive Director
BREADS

Street presence is a hallmark of the Don Bosco interventions with children and youth at risk. This pioneering strategy initiated decades ago, especially by BOSCO in Bangalore, has been adopted by many other social work organisations and promoted as a model by UNICEF. It is the application of Don Bosco's directive regarding assistance and presence among the young, as both an attitude and method: "Here in your midst I feel completely at home; for me, living means being here with you." The positive outcome from a vigilant and active presence is beyond measure, and I have witnessed it all through my years in BOSCO. In this Slice, we look more closely at the aspect of street presence in BREADS' work with its Don Bosco partners; and the way we instill the concept of 'presence' in other initiatives with marginalised communities—empowerment through education, skilling and outreach, and networking to create addiction-free societies, among other ways.

Dear friends of BREADS, several of you have appreciated the content and new look of Slice. We thank you and greatly appreciate your words of encouragement and valuable support to our mission.

Don Bosco on the Streets



I don't want to beg, I want to study; was the plea of 11-year old Sony (name changed), who was found by the BOSCO street presence staff at the KSR (main) railway station in Bangalore. Sony was taken to the girls' shelter at BOSCO Vatsalya Bhavan (BVB) where the search for her family began.

A child alone on the big city streets, living on scraps of mercy, Sony had vivid accounts of long days among the changing faces at crowded signals and public places (bus and train stations etc.), begging and peddling chewing tobacco for her stepfather.

The BVB staff tried to put together the circumstances that had forced Sony on to the streets to earn for her family. Sony was unable to communicate many details about her life before coming to Bangalore. She initially mentioned Kotipi in Andhra Pradesh, but checking with the CHILDLINE and police station there did not provide any clues. Many days later, Sony happened to mention Peddapadu hostel in Kurnool district, to the counsellor. The BVB staff contacted the Kurnool Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Sony was identified as one of the previous residents of the Girls Home in Peddapadu.



The various bits of Sony's story came together. A native of Kurnool, Sony's family broke up when her mother left her father, who was addicted to alcohol. Unfortunately, and in ignorance of the facts, Sony's mother remarried a man who begged for a living. She could not change him nor the circumstances and was forced to join him, taking Sony out of the Peddapadu Girls' Home, where she had been living for a while. The family begged during the days and spent the nights on the street; and after a while, migrated to Bangalore to continue this lifestyle.

Though her parents are not yet traced, Sony found a home in the hearts of the many people she met along the way. For the BVB staff, Sony was an adorable child, who readily listened to instructions and willingly joined in every event, activity, and chore. Greatly interested in studying, Sony also attempted

the 'bridge course' at the centre. With guidance and counselling, she started to let go of the residual guilt and shame from her time on the streets, and left BVB with a new determination to not let anyone or anything drag her back into the helplessness she had experienced on the streets. The BVB staff accompanied Sony back to Kurnool, where she has happily resumed her studies in the Peddapadu Girls Home.

The Don Bosco presence on the street, became in Sony's life, the personification of security, stability, education, and an affirmation of her voice and rights as a person. That vigilant presence of the staff has helped restore her lost childhood and most importantly, a life free from the hands of the exploiters, waiting to prey on vulnerable children for their evil ends.



Street Presence: A Child's Safety Net

Street presence is the lifeline of a Don Bosco Young at Risk (YaR) centre. It can be explained as a vigilant, proactive, dynamic, physical presence of a committed, caring adult at any location that a child may be at risk, to prevent harm to the child. It is very easy for vulnerable children to be picked up by pimps and traffickers, and therefore, the need for our 24/7 presence at strategic locations, backed up by a patrolling rescue vehicle. Vigilant street presence teams are often the first responders to children at risk, and an effective deterrent to traffickers and violators of child rights.

Despite the vast difference in the scenarios on the street over the years, this preventive and proactive nature of street presence

remains the same. All the staff in a YaR centre are fully oriented towards the importance of street presence, especially for a lost child; and most staff are deployed to strategic locations across the city. Fr George PS recalls that the Salesians (priests and clerics) took turns to go out after dinner, to the bus and railway stations, city market, etc.; where children would be found, to meet them and talk to the people around them, building caring communities on the street, creating awareness about child rights, and safe options for children at risk. It was also a practice for the staff to go out during power outages to be present on the streets.

This physical presence is expanded through the formation of 'caring communities' on



the streets: sanitary workers, auto drivers, railway staff, police personnel, vendors etc. who are made aware and responsible for alerting the child protection system about a vulnerable child. More than **400** such individuals have been enlisted into this service for children, becoming the eyes and ears of child protectors. Backed up by shelters, counselling, advocacy, partnerships, and networking with government and non-government entities, this crucial service of street presence has been spreading a safety net to rescue children from the dangers of the street, child labour, and other violations of their rights.

In 2022-23, our Don Bosco presence has impacted the lives of thousands of children:

5397 Bangalore	601 Kalaburagi	605 Davanagere
373 Thiruvananthapuram	2152 Mysuru	

Over the decades, the Don Bosco network has gained a reputation on the street, for dependable response to any child in distress, making it an important stakeholder and promoter of child safety and rights, in every place that it is present.

Street Presence: The Power of the Person

Ms Sheeba Thomas, in-charge of BOSCO Vatsalya Bhavan, having worked with BOSCO since the 1980s, recollects warmly, the richness as well as the challenges of being in the company of children and youth on the street, especially as a woman. The boys felt proud that someone wanted to talk to them, and her presence among them on the street prevented them from fighting, drinking, gambling, and above all, protected them from middlemen. They learned to save their money. As a paramedic, she could help them develop healthier habits to manage their lives better. The boys looked forward to a 'by-two' (half cup) chai and biscuit with her.

Ms Sheeba says working with children at risk demands high commitment to the child's best interests, and the heart to love and accept the child unconditionally. It calls for the openness to see the goodness in the child and learn from them. Exactly as Don Bosco advised, a caring presence has the

immense power to prevent harm and turn lives around.

Another veteran with 25 years of presence on the streets, Mr Ramaswamy from BOSCO Bangalore, echoes Ms Sheeba. He says the job is not easy because even we are at risk on the street, on behalf of the child at risk. Being present on the street calls for passion, dedication and commitment. If one has these, one is ready to sacrifice oneself for the best interests of the child. Then there's no need to dwell on whether the task is easy or hard. The social worker must get out of his comfort zone, face the threats of child rights violators, go to the children wherever they are, accept them as they are without any bias of caste, gender etc., listen and think from their perspective and so, create a presence for the child. The child must feel and know this presence of the social worker in their lives, even on the street, because the child is our destiny.

The passion and commitment of the Don Bosco street presence teams to the protection of child rights, is what brings hope to every single child in difficult circumstances, and drives our work forward to safeguard the best interests of the child.



CSN Coordinator Honoured as Atyhuthama Makkala Rakshaka



The Bangalore Labour Department of the Government of Karnataka, honoured Mr P.N Basavaraj, as Atyhuthama Makkala Rakshaka (Best Child Protector) in February 2024, in acknowledgement of his courageous service towards the rescue of child labourers, in collaboration with the government.

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Street Presence: A Preventive Presence

In an ever-changing scenario, BREADS and the Don Bosco network is challenged to be present with, and to the Young at Risk in different ways in society. The recent State-level Stakeholders' Workshop was an instance of BREADS reading the 'signs of the times' and taking the initiative to bring together key public and private players to prevent addictions among the youth in Kerala.

“Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his name is today.”

— Gabriela Mistral

Quoted by both Mr Manoj Kumar (Chairperson- Kerala State Commission for the Protection of Child Rights- KSCPCR), and Fr George PS (Executive Director- BREADS), as they stressed the need for urgent concerted action to prevent the ever-increasing substance use among children and youth in Kerala. KSCPCR and BREADS were the joint organisers of a significant State-level Stakeholders' Workshop on 29 February in Thiruvananthapuram, facilitating the active participation of 178 stakeholders from various government departments and NGOs. They had all assembled to discuss the




status of substance use among the youth in Kerala, and the measures needed to address the issue.

Each of the key Kerala government representatives — Dr V Venu (State Chief Secretary), Mr KV Manoj Kumar (Chairperson -KSCPCR), Dr Sharmila Mary Joseph (Principal Secretary-Women & Child, Social Justice, and Local Self Governance), Mr S. Shanavas (Director-General Education)—highlighted the different interventions by their respective departments towards substance use prevention among children. The KCPCR Chairperson assured all the stakeholders that their suggestions and deliberations would be presented to the state government for improvement of policy

and implementation, and to foster a public-private partnership.

With its strong presence in ten of fourteen districts in Kerala, since its inception in 2021, the BREADS' DREAM initiative has reached out to 10,38,723 children, 88,969 parents, 2342 teachers, and 4347 ambassadors through awareness programmes. With its counselling services and rehabilitation centre, DREAM and the Don Bosco network are in a position to spearhead a public and private partnership in the effort to help the youth of Kerala break free from addictions. The *State-level Stakeholders' Workshop* is a good start.

TCS MARATHON - Run for Shaping Her Education (SHE)






RUN FOR SHE

Shaping Her Education

TCS World 10K Bengaluru Marathon

BREADS is running to provide quality education to 100 girl children. Join us!



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SHE has a dream!

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Dear Donors, for
your support!

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Kiran & Jincy
Shyju Thomas
Elsy Jacob



CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2024

- Initiation of mobile clinics in three districts
- Kerala State-level Stakeholder Workshop - DREAM
- RESSAISIR 2K24 - Conference on Addiction and Psychosocial issues
- Inauguration of 23rd batch - DB BEST Academy
- Certification of 2nd batch - Don Bosco KGF
- Project monitoring visits by BREADS
- Exposure visits for MSW students to BREADS
- Project visits by funding partners: Kindermission & Begeca

MARCH 2024

- Celebration of Women's Day by DB Partners
- Initiation of a Province-level YaR assessment study
- Annual canonical visitation of the Provincial
- WELivE project extension to new beneficiaries
- Project monitoring visits by BREADS
- Foster Care project Stakeholders' meeting
- Project visits by funding partners
- Internships at BREADS by Social Work students

BREADS NEWS



RESSAISIR 2K24

RESSAISIR 2K24, was organised by the Department of Social Work, Don Bosco Arts & Science College, Kannur, Kerala, in collaboration with BREADS...

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Sewing a path to empowerment

On 6 February 2024, the inauguration of the third batch of the Tailoring skill training programme, consisting of 40 women, took place at...

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A second batch of women entrepreneurs are ready at Don Bosco ITI KGF

Don Bosco ITI KGF, supported by Bangalore Rural Educational...

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Igniting a spark in Mount Carmel College

Mount Carmel College invited BREADS to conduct an awareness session for its students, on the importance of sobriety, from marginalized backgrounds, in a world full of temptations...

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Health Camp at Ittaga K Thanda, Kalaburagi

On 27 February 2024, Don Bosco PYaR organised a health camp at Ittaga K Thanda, Kalaburagi, which...

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CSN Coordinator honoured as Athyuthama Makkala Rakshaka

The Bangalore Labour Department of the Government of Karnataka, honoured Mr P.N. Basavaraj, ...

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