

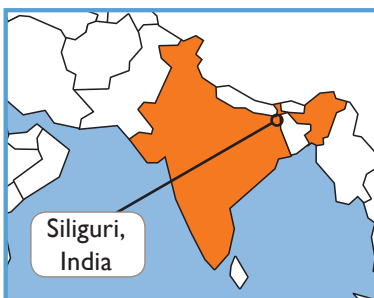
CASE STUDY: INDIA

SILIGURI URBAN PILOT PROJECT

Urbanisation is a global megatrend that is changing the aid and development landscape. The world's population is already over half 'urban', with more than one billion people living in slums.

World Vision has established a Centre of Expertise for Urban Programming that is leading urban pilot projects in six countries. The pilots are testing innovative, locally driven urban poverty solutions such as securing urban land rights, influencing municipal policy implementation, and creating livelihood opportunities – with children and youth leading change in their communities.

The Siliguri Urban Pilot Project promotes sustained civic engagement to reduce the incidence of child labour and child trafficking.



Project name: Kopila Siliguri Project

First Phase Start Date: October 2009

First Phase End Date: September 2013

City population: 509,709 (est.)

District population: 1,842,034

Direct project participants: 6,000 children & youth, and 10,000 adults

Proportion of national urban population in slums: 34.8% (2005 est.)

Annual national slum population growth rate: 2% (2001 est.)

Projected Indian urban population by 2030: 611,406,700

PROJECT CONTEXT

Situated in a narrow corridor of land between the borders of Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan rests the city of Siliguri, which is the biggest and fastest growing urban agglomeration in West Bengal. Being an emerging commercial transit city, Siliguri functions as something of a 'hub' for migration – some of which is forced, and some of which involves unsupervised children – attributed to comparatively large numbers of tourists, hotels, restaurants and retail stores. It boasts an extensive transport network: a nearby airport, a major railway line, and roads connecting through to the north-east area of India.

The red-light district was located near the major thoroughfare, and is a well-known location to both locals and tourists. The prominence of hotels, advertisements for the nearby Darjeeling district and high visibility of foreigners also demonstrates the importance of the city as a tourist destination and gateway. Together the confluence of transport links, tourism and visible sex industry are suggestive of Siliguri's various roles as source, hub and destination in the trafficking trade to cities such as Kolkata, which has a notoriously large red light district, or as far as Pune and Mumbai, and even the Middle East.

PROJECT GOAL	Sustained civic engagement to reduce the incidence of child labour and child trafficking.
PROJECT OUTCOMES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stakeholders in the target area empowered to prevent, protect and restore children at risk of child labour and child trafficking. 2. Stakeholders effectively monitor and manage the vigilance mechanisms on child trafficking. 3. Stakeholders share and adopt good practices and processes for combating cross-border child trafficking. 4. Continual project review to inform development of an urban model.

PROJECT APPROACH

The project, operating in six target slum areas of the city, includes establishing local vigilance committees and child protection units. These units include school teachers, social workers and local leaders. Their aim is to strengthen social protection, monitoring and reporting mechanisms to reduce incidences of child labour and trafficking in Siliguri.



Non-formal education (NFE) centres have been set up in the six communities. This service offers homework or extra lesson clubs targeting children from slum areas who remain outside the formal education system. Volunteers provide basic education and life-skills training, while World Vision provides uniforms and basic stationery, and together this supports the integration of children back into the formal system.

Other community-based activities include supporting local child well-being groups and youth clubs to create positive peer environments for children and youth. The project has also encouraged the observation of special days such as International Children's Day and International Women's Day to unite and mobilise communities around relevant causes.

The other major component of the project is the Siliguri Anti Trafficking Network (ATN), which consists of seven local and national NGO partners, and works closely with government authorities. The project takes initiative by providing training to the West Bengal Police, Border Security Force (BSF) which guards the Indo-Bangladesh border, and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) which guards the Indo-Nepal border. A number of the partners in the ATN are both time- and resource-poor, and also do not possess World Vision's access to key government actors. World Vision's support – in terms of resources, but perhaps more significantly, in terms of facilitation and networking – for this and other local operational NGOs, is therefore critical.

KEY OUTCOMES

- The ATN is an excellent example of working with other NGOs on a specific, albeit complex, issue. It has collectively helped in the repatriation and reunion of many trafficked children with their families, and several network members have shelter houses set up for at-risk or rescued children.
- In the three years since the NFE centres were established, around 500 children have been enrolled in the formal school system.
- The project has coordinated training on child rights and anti-trafficking laws for the Border Security Force. Officers are often not aware of the legal mechanisms designed to prevent human trafficking and child labour.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- The ATN in Siliguri shows promise as a means for consolidating NGO support into a robust advocacy and action platform.
- Through collective action, the ATN is positioned to functionally and politically scale up through collaboration with other organisations and sectors whilst recognising different power dynamics. Government officials are more likely to respond to a request from the network, because of its size and influence, rather than any single NGO. Before the World Vision project there was no common platform or shared strategy among these diverse local and national NGOs.
- Recognition of the role of the built environment in relation to child trafficking needs further attention. For example, the NGO Concern operates a children's shelter and information desk from the central railway station – a key transit point for child trafficking. Despite the very basic facilities, the local government provides some financial support for Concern, an example of outsourcing the delicate physical and emotional care required in working with victims. More must be done in relation to time- and place-based initiatives through the ATN: creating a Child-friendly City, or Childsafe zones in the city (e.g. shopping malls, main streets) adapting ideas

from UNICEF's model, where abusive labour and trafficking are explicitly condemned by city leaders in government and business.

- The growing use of mobile technologies provides opportunities for messaging apps, website content, etc., to be explored as a channel for building awareness and empowering victims – both among children and the broader community. These would be useful supplements to existing resources, such as Childline (India's first toll-free helpline for street children in distress), given that adolescents, particularly in urban slums and rural areas, have some access to mobile technologies. The use of technology is prevalent among traffickers themselves; use of technology to pursue an anti-trafficking agenda would therefore negate this current comparative advantage that organised criminal networks possess.
- Quality of schooling emerged as a critical issue for combatting child labour and trafficking, particularly. Without adequate quality and teaching capacity, schooling is not seen as a viable alternative to full-time work for children and further places children at risk of child trafficking.



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