

Guide for Individual Assessment Tool for Railway Children

(13th May 2014)

Notes about the Tool

- i. This is a tool for individual assessment of railway children.
- ii. The objective is to elicit information on individual child/ context/ unique universe the child comes from.
- iii. The objective of this tool is not to elicit highly specific information for quantitative purposes. Therefore, we are not using depth survey methods; we are using largely qualitative methods, focussing on children's narratives so as to have a clear understanding of survival challenges and survival strategies. The themes and issues that arise thereof can be used to draft policy.
- iv. All information is elicited based on child's knowledge and understanding i.e. self-report.
- v. The tool is a combination of consultative questions and participatory activities/ exercises that use creative methods to have conversations with the child, in order to elicit relevant information from the child.
- vi. Although the tool has a structure, it is not necessary to use it like a survey questionnaire i.e. in a linear manner. Non-linear ways of administering the tool are acceptable— as long as the child guides the interview process.
- vii. Do not just ask—observe!

For the Pilot:

- i. The piloting of the tool is to be implemented among children living/ working in the railway station. We are aware that there are other groups of children who may have been railway children but who are now in state institutions or rehabilitated and working. However, for the purposes of the pilot, we will restrict ourselves children in the immediate context of the railway station (arriving, living in/ around/ working in railways stations). (For other groups, a modified tool may be considered later on).
- ii. We are aware that each agency may have participatory methods/ activities similar to those in the tool. For the purposes of the pilot, we prefer that the methods suggested in the tool are followed. This will enable greater uniformity in data and help us know about the effectiveness of these methods especially because it is hard to obtain sensitive information in a short time or in a one-off interview. Thus, the tool is designed, keeping in mind the challenges of working in this area. (At a later stage of development of the tool, substituting current methods with other similar ones may be considered).
- iii. The tool will be piloted strictly in accordance with ethical considerations. It has been agreed (by those attending the initial discussion on the tool) that children will be offered/ provided with assistance if information on issues such as physical/ sexual/ substance abuse and other mental health problems (such as self-harm) are disclosed or elicited. For the Bangalore pilot, NIMHANS will be providing these interventions subject to consent of the child. The piloting agency will offer all enabling assistance in

getting the child to NIMHANS. In other places, the agencies conducting the pilot need to have similar strategic collaborations with service providers.

- iv. It is assumed that the users of this tool are experienced in working with railway children and have the necessary skills in approaching/communicating with them.
- v. At the start of the tool, a verbatim of how to set the context and obtain consent from the child before the interview, is available. Case workers/ others piloting the tool are requested to use this.
- vi. A separate form for field workers has been developed—following the pilot/ use of the tool, they are requested to provide their feedback according to the guidelines provided in the form. This will be used to revise and modify the tool.