

STREET CHILDREN: more than meets the eye

We see them. They fight in the streets, they beg, they wash cars. We see the mothers with babies and babies without mothers. We see old and young, clean and dirty alike. We see them leaning on our cars, some blind, others on wheel chairs. We see them. They fight in the streets, they beg, they wash cars. We see the mothers with babies and babies without mothers.

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We see old and young, clean and dirty alike. We see them leaning on our cars, some blind, others on wheel chairs. Begging us to help them and others demanding help using threats and force.

We cannot avoid them but the saddest thing is that most of the times we ignore them – I ignore them. These children do not know any other home but the streets, specific streets or alleys they consider safe. They are homeless children.

I belong to a young team of actors, dancers and singers. Practically all of us are in university. We go by the name *Khweva*. Just last week we put up our very first musical ever and it was tremendously successful!

During the dancers' initial rehearsals at Central Park, these homeless children used to join the rehearsal or just hang around. At first we were not comfortable with their presence but after interacting with them we saw they were not any different from us. We gave them snacks we had carried or drinks we had bought but they actually never went away; they always stayed to dance or at least to watch. When rehearsals moved to the nearby YMCA we met them again in the CBD (Central Business District) on our way home from rehearsals. This time we bought them milk and bread.

What amazed us was the consideration they had for each other: children and girls being served before the elder ones, saying thank you afterwards. Such simple mannerisms that most of us lacked. Seeing fellow cast members from a well-off background interact with

these kids was quite the sight. Soon it was a norm: buying these kids milk and bread after rehearsal. From the little pocket money we had, we were able to at least give a small meal to people who actually needed it.

With this initiative the cast has learnt to take care of others and of each other, to interact with people of whatever background and stay cheerful. If street kids can afford to laugh and smile who are we to frown? To some extent some of us consider this as "pay it forward" act. We have been assisted in more ways than one in building up *Khweva*, hence it's only fitting to help those in need and those nearest to us.
