**Reaching Hand** envisions an empowered future for all by acting as a catalyst for social change. Reaching Hand is a registered charitable trust started in 1996, to work with orphan and abandoned children from vulnerable communities. Integration of children from all sections of society through education and skill development is the key focus of Reaching Hand.

**Executive Summary**

The world is falling short in its promise and commitment to ensure that every child enjoys a safe and nurturing childhood. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came to force in 1989, provides children – in both rich and poor countries – the right to a childhood in which they can learn, play, and be healthy, and develop. However, 23 years after the adoption of the Convention and after more than 15 years of market-led economic growth, governments and the international community are still far from fulfilling children’s rights and creating a world fit for children. Over half of the children in the developing world live in poverty. In the context of India there are 25 million children who are deprived of access to the most basic needs such as food, shelter and services. The global orphan crisis encompasses more than 163 million children in our world today. With the loss of one or both parents, these children sleep each night with the burden of pain, grief, fear, and the pervasive feeling of being incomplete. The crisis is not a set of statistics. The crisis is real children, with real lives, with real pain and fear. These children not only have to deal with the trauma of being orphaned, but the threat of enslavement, forced labor, disease, homelessness, hunger and abuse. The list of threats is endless. The reality unconscionable!

India is the world’s largest democracy with a population of over 1.2 billion, 400 million of which are children. According to UNICEF, in 2007, there were 25 million orphans in India and are deprived of basic needs. However, only 3,332 adoptions (853 international, 2479 domestic) took place in 2006. The impact of orphan population is not yet fully known, but a recent Info Change India news feature claims that "India is home to the largest number of AIDS orphans in the world." UNICEF believes that the number of orphans will continue to rise in India due to its economy. These children are those for whom the street more than their family has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision, or direction from responsible adults. Human Rights Watch estimates that majority of these children are more vulnerable to crime, prostitution, gang related violence and drug trafficking. They desperately need the intervention soon. Most of the orphans and vulnerable children were living with surviving parents or extended family, many of them are being cared for by a remaining parent who is sick or dying, elderly grandparents who themselves are often in need of care and support, or impoverished relatives struggling to meet the needs of their own children. Children living in these situations are at increased risk of losing opportunities for school, health care, growth, development, nutrition, and shelter; in short, their rights to a decent and fulfilling human existence. Moreover, with the death of a parent, children experience profound loss and a heavy burden falls to the surviving parent. If the second parent also dies, all aspects of that child’s world are threatened. Studies in many countries find that families and communities will absorb orphaned and affected children as long as their resources are sufficient. When the family and community capacity to absorb children has been reached, increasing numbers of children must look after themselves. Often the eldest child takes responsibility as the head of the household.

Some of these children are left with no other option than to live on the streets, exposing them to even greater medical, social, and psychological difficulties.

**Need of the hour**

Homeless and impoverished orphans & vulnerable children of Bangalore urban and rural are in need of protection and care. When children lose their parents to an illness like AIDS or in accident working in the construction sites or because of alcoholism, a relative generally takes in the child and cares for them. When no relative is able to care for a child, they are forced to live on the street and for that child, all hope is lost. Life is hard enough for a child when steps into the street. Poverty in childhood is a root cause of poverty in adulthood. Impoverished children often grow up to be impoverished parents who in turn bring up their own children in poverty. In order to break the generational cycle, poverty reduction must begin with children.

The growing demand for care and support of orphans and vulnerable children at the community level has strained traditional coping mechanisms to a crisis stage in the most heavily affected countries. An increasing number of communities and government structures are struggling to harness the impact on children and their families. In the absence of support there will be long-term developmental impacts on children and the future of these countries. Failure to support children to overcome this trauma will have a very negative impact on society and might cause dysfunctional societies, jeopardizing years of investment in national development. Care and support for orphans and vulnerable children has primarily focused on addressing their basic needs. The secondary focus of programs has been to address the needs for skill transfer and education for children. Even fewer programs have been able to adequately address the medical, social welfare and psychological needs of children. It is essential that medical care, socio-economic support, human rights and legal support, and psychosocial support interventions are implemented in the mutually reinforcing manner necessary to provide comprehensive care and support for orphans and other vulnerable children. Although programs have responded to some of these needs and elements, they are often fragmented and lack a comprehensive approach. It is widely recognized that one organization or program cannot address all of these needs alone. Reaching Hand understands the gravity of the situation and feels compassionate by chip in with help & support.

**Address to the need**

Reaching Hand have been working in the areas of rehabilitation of children from vulnerable communities by providing them a safe, protective environment where their basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and education are met. The basic needs are critical at this point of time for the children who are vulnerable. In the year 2006, we have started the project New Homes - a child protection a care centre. The children of New Homes are from broken homes, with or without single parents who is financially destitute, or because of weak or non-existent relationships with parents or step parents. They all need security, nurturing, guidance, and protection as they attend school to prepare for responsible adulthood to be leader and productive citizens. It's a home not an institution; Reaching Hand doesn't do orphanages. Instead, orphans are raised in family environments. This fresh, dynamic approach to confronting the world orphan crisis through establishing and supporting community-based family homes has proven to be extremely successful.

We at Reaching Hand believe that the first day and the first week is very crucial for the child at home and we spend maximum time with the child understanding his/her psychology, behavior, habits, interest, health status. The moment the child enters, we create an atmosphere of belonging and special after which followed by delicious food and new clothes. Then slowly the child gets influenced by the other children and get adjust immediately. The counselor’s (child psychologist) initial intervention creates magic. After one week, the child feel relax and comfortable, start talking with other roommates and share experiences with them. Then the journey begins. The shift that is happening in the lives of children after enrolling in the homes is remarkable which we can be seen in various activities; be it in studies or extracurricular activities. Suddenly we can feel the growth in resistance power and capacity of accept change.

The children of New Homes are ranges from 4 to 12+ years of age. They attend English medium schools and participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, music and events. After the school the houseparent and staff help them with homework; direct them toward responsibility and high ideals of love, discipline, support and guide them through teenage struggles. Most of our children come to us from homes in crisis. The children are usually removed from a difficult situation by a family member or the legal system. Many of our children have experienced such severe degrees of abuse that they face difficulty in adjusting to a “normal” home life. Therefore Reaching Hand acts as a catalyst and always reacts to this situation seriously, rescues the children from all kind of exploitations.

Reaching Hand provides young children a clean living environment, nutritious food, schooling needs, value based education, extra-curricular activities and life skills. Our objective is to help today's children become responsible leaders of tomorrow and contribute to their family, society and country. We care for these children without regard for race, religion, culture, national origin, or financial or social status. The purpose of the home is to nurture, guide, and inspire children to be honest and simple, have a healthy life. The goals of the homes are to help children become responsible citizens of their community, hold fulfilling jobs, and care for their fellow man.

Together, we can make an enormous difference to the lives of these children who, without our care & support will continue in the poverty cycle. These children will be the future leaders within their communities and hopefully beyond into the broader horizons of India. They will always take with them the comfort of our love and the appreciation of the opportunities; they have been given to enhance their lives both now and in the future.

**About NEW HOME - A child protection and care centre**

Homeless and impoverished orphans in rural & urban Bangalore are in need of care and education. When children lose their parents to an illness like AIDS or in accident working in the construction sites or because of alcoholism, a relative generally takes in the child and cares for them. When no relative is able to care for a child, they are forced to live on the street and for that child, all hope is lost. Life is hard enough for a child when steps into the street. Poverty in childhood is a root cause of poverty in adulthood. Impoverished children often grow up to be impoverished parents who in turn bring up their own children in poverty. In order to break the generational cycle, poverty reduction **must** begin with children.

Bangalore has an estimated 75,000 street children among that 85% are orphans. There are a combination of those on and off the street and those who are completely abandoned. They usually live in groups in self-dedicated areas of Bangalore. All of them are subject to severe kinds of exploitation, physical, sexual or financial. Substance abuse, high-risk sexual behavior and non-availability of basic services are issues of immediate concern. We believe that if a child receives adequate and timely services & intervention then they can kick the habit, and become sensitive. Our frequent interactions with the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) and the advocacy of our work with developmental agencies have led to the development of a strong, collaborative relationship with the government.

The children of New Home; are from broken homes, without or with single parents who is financially destitute, or because of weak or non-existent relationships with parents or step parents. They all need security, nurturing, guidance, and protection as they prepare for responsible adulthood and productive citizens.

Reaching Hand is dedicated to provide protection and care to the children who are neglected, abused, or in need of a home and family.  We care for these children without regard for race, religion, culture, national origin, or financial or social status. Many of our children have experienced such severe degrees of abuse that they face difficulty in adjusting to a “normal” home life. Our approach to children starts with a fun filled counseling and carried away with an affection love.

Currently, Reaching Hand has two child protection and care centre both for boys and girls separately. At present the Home has 21 girls & 25 boys among them 7 are orphan and 38 are semi-orphans with extended family. The children of New Home range from 4 to 12+ years of age. They attend English medium schools, and are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, dance and even access to computer peripherals. The houseparent and staff help the children with homework; direct them toward responsibility and high ideals of love, discipline, support and example as well as guiding them through teenage struggles.

The goal of the Homes is to nurture, guide, and inspire children to be honest, have a healthy self-image, and become productive citizens of country by hold fulfilling jobs, care for their fellow man and live a life of dignity and pride.