

# AASHRAY ADHIKAR ABHIYAN



## **Who We Are**

Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan came into existence in the year 2000 as a campaign for the rights of urban homelessness in Delhi. Since then it has been working in Delhi towards realisation of the rights of the homeless people as enshrined in the Constitution of India as well as in various International Conventions and Treaties.

## **What We Do**

Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) is a rights-based programme which believes that homeless people have the right to live in peace, dignity and security. Homeless people's rights are violated every single night and day in the city of Delhi. The homeless are often deprived of civic amenities such as water and sanitation; denied access to medical treatment; forced to work for below the minimum wage; face daily beatings and harassment from the police and; compelled to sleep in the open because of inadequate shelters. AAA's aims are two-fold:

- To empower, mobilise and strengthen the capacity of the homeless so they are able to assert their rights and live with honour and dignity.
- To make the citizens and Government of Delhi recognise that the homeless have inalienable rights and that it is their responsibility to help the homeless live in dignity.

AAA has been in operation since March, 2000. It developed into a model ready for replication in other parts of the country. AAA's strength has been its participation mode of working. A large majority of its field workers viz: community workers are the homeless who constitute AAA's field workforce. The care takers at the shelters are well trained homeless.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

- To empower, strengthen and mobilise the homeless people so that they are able to assert their rights in order to live with honour and dignity.
- To make the homeless people capable of gainful employment.
- To make the citizens and the State recognise that the homeless people, too, have inalienable rights and that it is their responsibility to help the homeless people live with honour and dignity enjoying such rights.
- To provide certain services to the homeless people such as shelters, medical care, clothes, food, legal aid, education to homeless children, etc.

## **Background:**

It is estimated that there are around 1, 00,000 homeless in Delhi. They are mostly unorganised sector workers who due to erratic income pattern can't afford regular housing and lead an anonymous life as a homeless. Majority of them being migrated from neighbouring states, do not have any identification in the city, like ration card etc.

AAA's time to time studies & surveys as well as daily level interaction with the homeless has revealed that health seeking behaviour of the homeless is based on the lack of dignity and empowerment. Access to health care is not there due to non-conducive environment for the homeless who all the time suffers from social exclusion. Due to their living conditions and everyday struggle on the street, the common mental health disorders are very common among the homeless. Their low level of literacy adds to this grievance. They are shunned by hospitals, if they try to go on their own. The hospitals prescribe the medicine which needs to be procured from the markets. Low economic strength does not allow them to

buy medicine from the market. Thus it becomes important to make the state accountable for the rights of homeless which are so far alien to them.

### Our Activities

- **Shelter Management** – working in collaboration with Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to manage shelters across Delhi, which provide a safe place for homeless people including women and children to sleep throughout the day and night. AAA currently manages 14 permanent Shelters in Delhi and the largest homeless shelter at Fatehpuri with a 450 person capacity.
- **Save The Lives of Homeless People** - AAA initiated a programme to save the lives of homeless people during harsh winter season in the year 2002 which is continuing till date. This rescue program is dedicated to the most marginalised community of existing society.
- **Health Outreach Service** – Providing health outreach services and street based clinics for general health problems, mental health patients, and drug counselling in partnership with Institute of Human Behavior and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) since 2001. This includes free medicine and referrals to specialised health care services. AAA also provides attendants when patients are hospitalized.
- **Children Education** – Providing formal education and tutoring to homeless children. We also have separate shelter space for children and provide free nutritious meals.
- **Programme for the Elderly:** Providing free shelter, medicine, and clothes and specially designated elderly sections at our shelters.
- **Food Programme:** We have a small kitchen located at our children's shelter providing 3 nutritious meals daily to children, mentally ill patients under our care and the acutely physically sick undergoing treatment.
- **Facilitating Collective Action** – Mobilising and raising social awareness amongst the homeless. AAA facilitates in organizing collectives of homeless people like the elderly and women's collective that discuss and take action on issues that affect them e.g. police, harassment, displacement, shelter, citizenships rights etc.
- **Capacity Building** – Developing homeless people's skills to gain meaningful employment.
- **Towards full citizenship** – Through advocacy and meetings with the election commission we have been able to enrol homeless people into the voter's list and given them a national Identity Card empowering them to be participants in mainstream society.
- **Sensitization** – Breaking myths and promoting understanding about homeless people. Sensitization programs are carried out for school/ college students, police, health personnel, corporate etc.
- **Research & Documentation** – Undertaking primary research to find out more about the needs, aspirations and problem of homeless people using participatory research tools.