

# Comprehensive Digitised Survey of **PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE ACT OF BEGGING AND THOSE WHO ARE AT RISK IN DELHI**



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## Table of Contents

<b><u>OVERVIEW .....</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>
<b><u>OPERATIONAL DEFINITION.....</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>LIMITATIONS .....</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>
<b><u>KEY SURVEY FINDINGS .....</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>
<b><u>CONCLUSION &amp;RECOMMENDATIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

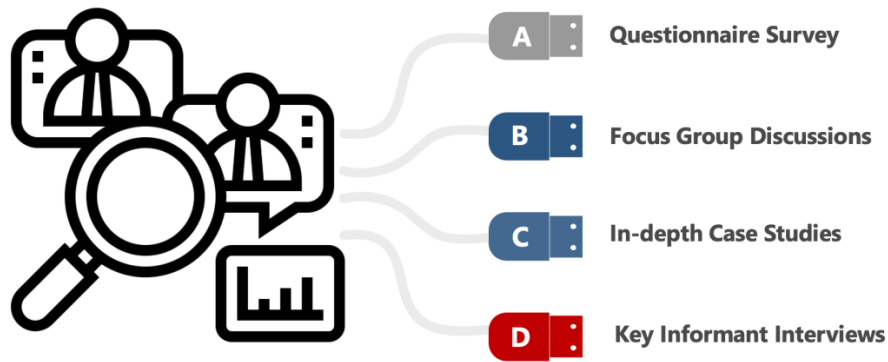
### OVERVIEW

Despite India's rapid economic growth as a developing nation, begging continues to remain one of the critical issues in India. Beggary has been defined as 'soliciting or receiving money, clothes or other things in a public place or by entering private premises, usually by people who have no visible means of subsistence and remain or wander in any public space'. Such people engaged in begging constitute the most deprived, poor and vulnerable section of the society in dire need of rehabilitation.

There has been a lack of reliable and updated estimates available on such people involved in begging across the districts of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. To formulate an effective rehabilitation strategy, there is a need to provide realistic estimates of people engaged in begging across eleven districts of Delhi. Considering this, the study covered four objectives:

- (1) To estimate the number of 'persons engaged in begging' across different districts/geographic locations.
- (2) To provide a profile of such people across age groups and gender.
- (3) To prepare a profile of 'persons engaged in begging' in forms of various characteristics such as with or without family; disability, geographical locations, activity before begging etc.
- (4) To provide a broad framework of the magnitude and nature of the implementation plan for the rehabilitation of 'persons engaged in begging'.

A semi-structured questionnaire, consisting of closed and open-ended questions was developed to collect field-level information across the 11 districts of Delhi including North, North- East, North-West, West, South, South- West, South-East, New-Delhi, Central, Shahdara and East. To supplement field-level data, key informant interviews with stakeholders and case studies were also undertaken to understand the situation in-depth.



### Survey Tools

#### OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

The study adopted definition set by the Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act (BPBA) 1959, which was extended to NCT of Delhi in 1960, ‘Beggary’ means:

- (i) Soliciting or receiving alms, in a public place whether or not under any pretence such as singing, dancing, fortune-telling, performing or offering any article for sale;
- (ii) (ii) Entering on any private premises for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms;
- (iii) (iii) Exposing or exhibiting, with the object of obtaining or extorting alms, any sore wound, injury, deformity or diseases whether of a human being or animal;
- (iv) Having no visible means of subsistence and wandering, about or remaining in any public place in such condition or manner, as makes it likely that the person doing so exist for soliciting or receiving alms; and
- (v) Allowing oneself to be used as an exhibit for the purpose of soliciting or receiving alms. But does not include soliciting or receiving money or food or given for a purpose authorized by any law or authorized in the manner prescribed by (Deputy Commissioner or such other officials as be specified in this by the Chief Commissioner).

#### LIMITATIONS

Necessary steps were undertaken in the survey to include all the people engaged in begging in the city. However, the study still has some limitations which may have resulted in some underestimation of the number of people engaged in begging across the districts in of the city.

- Identifying beggars has been a complex issue as generally, any person who ‘looks’ like a beggar –untidy, unkempt, shabbily dressed or of the unsound mental frame–is presumed to be a beggar. Further, it was extremely difficult differentiating between homeless people, street vendors, landless labourers who migrate to bigger cities in search of livelihood, destitute people and other categories of people who fall into the category of persons engaged in begging.
- The people engaged in beggary frequently keep moving from one hotspot location to another due to voluntary and involuntary reasons. Voluntary reasons for mobility include a search for more lucrative begging spots. Involuntary reasons include forceful eviction by authorities and weather extremities, pandemic restrictions. The movement of such people posed a challenge during the enumeration process.
- It was also very challenging to get time from persons engaged in begging to answer the questionnaire as it meant a loss of income from them.
- The pandemic restrictions on gatherings affected the interview process especially around congested areas due to policing. Police personnel stopped investigators at several places for taking interviews given the Covid situation and restrictions on gatherings.
- The Covid restrictions imposed by the government, Market Associations, RWAs, policing may have restricted their movement and led to return to their native cities
- Another challenge was migration, which was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic during the survey period. A significant number of them had returned to their native places due to inability to pay rents and/or did not get enough alms as also pointed out during 15 out of 30 FGDs. The pandemic led lockdown created a difficult situation for their survival in the city.
- Children (under the age of 10 years) found engaged in the physical act of begging were counted but a detailed survey was not undertaken for them due to their inability to respond to the questions. There were many children/adults who occasionally indulged in other economic activities as well such as rag-picking, domestic workers. It was very difficult to identify and count such individuals if they were not engaged in begging at the time of the survey.

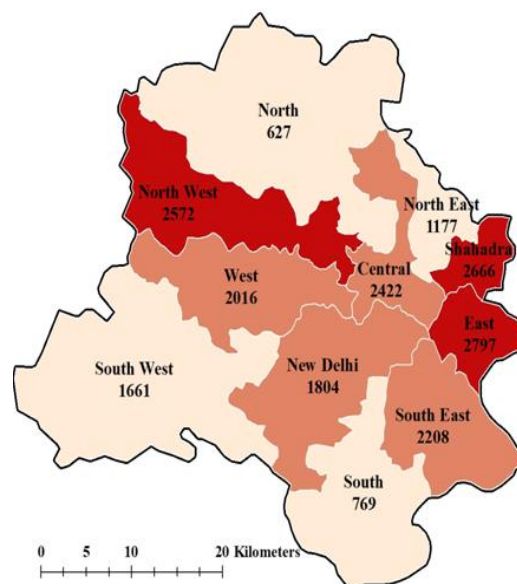
- Transgenders have not been discussed in detail given the low magnitude of them found engaged in the act of beggary in Delhi-NCT. Another survey could be undertaken to understand their needs in detail and to include them into the mainstream.

The key findings and recommendations of the survey are discussed in the subsequent sections.

## KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

### Profile

Around, 20,719 people were found to be engaged in begging across 11 districts of Delhi. Out of the total, 53 per cent (10,987) were males, 46 per cent (9,541) were females, and the remaining 1 per cent (191) were transgenders. They were highest in East Delhi (2797), Shahdara (2666), Northwest Delhi (2572); closely followed by Central Delhi (2422), Southeast Delhi (2208), West Delhi (2016), New Delhi (1804); and least in Southwest Delhi (1661), Northeast Delhi (1177), South Delhi (769) and the North Delhi (627).



**District-wise map showing number of People engaged in Begging**

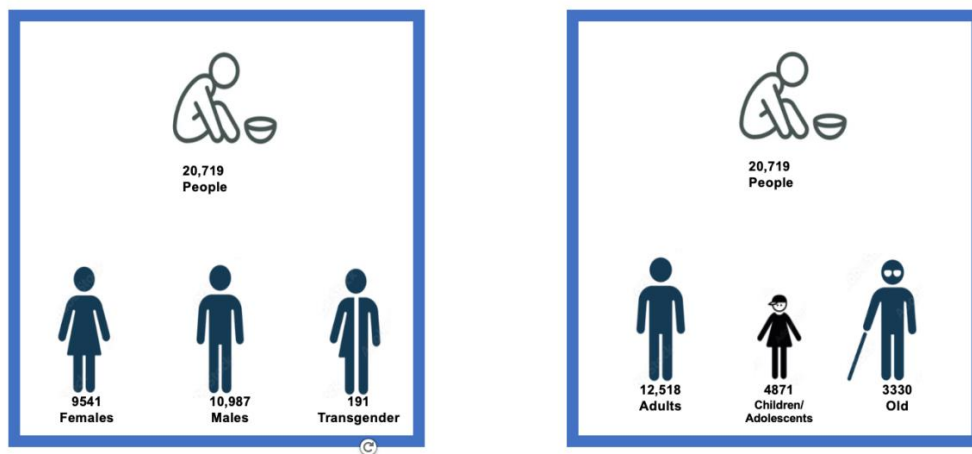
The study findings also provide empirical evidence regarding the following facts on people engaged in begging.

- They were found highly concentrated at religious places, streets or footpaths, traffic

signals, and market areas.

- About 60 per cent (12,518) were adults (18-59 years), followed by 24 per cent (4871) children/adolescents (0-17 years), and 16 per cent (3330) old (60+ years) people.
- Over half (55 per cent) of the adults (18+ years) were married and one-fifth (21 per cent) were single, and one-fourth (24 per cent) were either widowed (16 per cent) or separated (7 per cent)
- Majority of them were illiterate (70 per cent), followed by up to primary level (22 per cent) and secondary & above level of education (8 per cent).
- They were mainly engaged in the act of begging as (i) part-timer (20 per cent), (ii) physically disabled (13 per cent), (iii) hereditary (11 per cent), (iv) casual (11 per cent), (v) temporary unemployed (11 per cent) and (vi) child/ juvenile (8 per cent), (vii) destitute (6 per cent), (viii) babies in arms (5 per cent), and (ix) religious mendicants (5 per cent).
- Around 67 per cent were migrants mainly belonging from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

### Gender-wise and Age-wise People Engaged in Begging



Source: Primary Survey

### Lives and Livelihood

- Over half (55 per cent) of them were homeless or shelter-less, while the rest (45 per cent) resided either in Slums or Jhuggi Jhopdi (JJ) Colony.
- More than half (52 per cent) were 'new entrants', around 40 per cent were 'old timers', and 8 per cent were engaged in begging since birth.
- They were forced into begging largely due to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, old

age/disability/illness and also some able bodies involved in begging due to easy money.

- Several have lost their jobs or livelihood due to Covid-19 and were forced into begging in particular women involved in domestic work, temporary workers in the hotel, drivers, and security guards etc.
- Majority earned less than INR 200 per day i.e., 65 per cent, 23 per cent earned in the range of INR 200-INR 500, and 12 per cent received alms in kind.
- One-fifth of them were engaged in some part-time work such as casual labourer in construction and factory, rag picking, domestic help, petty business activities, street vendors, rickshaw pulling and some low paid temporary salaried jobs.
- One-fourth of them reported that their family members were also involved in begging in some other locations in Delhi.
- Around 44 per cent of them revealed that they were engaged in some economic activities such as casual labour activities, self-employment in street vending, small petty business, rickshaw pulling, rag picking, and salaried jobs before their engagement in begging.
- Based on FGDs, largely, everyone accepted that there has been a drop in their daily income since Covid. Some of them stated that the Covid pandemic had pushed them towards begging otherwise they were engaged in working and earning their living as a wage earner. Since the onset of Covid-19, being temporarily employed, they started sitting outside religious places to get some fruits, sweets and prasad. Discussions also revealed that some domestic helpers had entirely lost their jobs while others could go to a lesser number of houses than pre-Covid times, losing out on their earnings.
- They are also faced with several challenges such as lack of drinking water, toilet facility, shelter, lack of food, bathing space, medical help, education for children and harassment by police, shop keepers, passerby, drug peddlers and municipal authorities etc.

### Aspirations and Assistance

- Majority of them (80 per cent) preferred to leave begging in case some alternative livelihood opportunities could be made available for them.
- The reasons to leave begging mentioned by them included support for employment



(34 per cent), dignified life (22 per cent), financial help (19 per cent) to start business/trade, pension or monetary support for disability/old age/ill-health (13 per cent), education/skill training (8 per cent), shelter (4 per cent) and dignified life.

- Children/adolescents required assistance for education/skill training, youth and adults for employment, and financial help to start a business, and pension or monetary help for old aged or disabled people.
- Around one-fifth of them did not want to leave begging due to easy money, hereditary profession, religious mendicants, old age/disability/ill health and financial problem.
- They required a range of assistance for their rehabilitation such as (i) high priority: home/shelter, food, financial help, employment; (ii) medium priority: education/training, health care facilities; and (iii) low priority: clothes/bedding, and identity proof/documents etc.
- The priorities differed across the age-groups as assistance in education/skill training and food for children/adolescent; job/employment and shelter for youth; job/employment, shelter and financial help for adults; and food, financial help and shelter for old, aged people.
- Majority required wage employment (66 per cent) either regular or casual work, followed by education/skill training (32 per cent) or self-employment (2 per cent).
- Key skill trainings suggested by the male respondents in order of importance include Packaging; Car mechanic; Stitching/tailoring; Art; Computer training; Broom making; Electrician; Cook/ chef; Polish and painting; Driving training; Cobbler; Paper binding; Musical instruments/singing; Vocational training; Toy making; Embroidery training; Bamboo products; Candlemaking; Bag making; and Barber.
- Key skill trainings suggested by the female respondents in order of importance include Stitching/tailoring; Packaging; Cook/ chef; Beauty parlour; Vocational training; Toy making Broom making; Computer training; Embroidery training/work; Art; Nail polish and painting; Paper binding; Dance training; musical instruments/singing; Bamboo products; Candlemaking; Bag making and Paper binding.
- Some wage employment suggested by the male respondents in order of importance includes Any regular salaried job; Any casual wage work; Driver; Construction worker; Security guard; Sales jobs; Domestic helper; Housekeeping job; Catering

job; Cobbler job; Catering job; Helper/assistance job; Art teacher job; Field work related job; Cleaner job; Data entry job; Gardener job; and Insurance agent.

- Some important wage employment suggested by the female respondents in order of importance include: Any regular salaried job; Domestic helper; Housekeeping job; Any casual wage work; Sales job; Construction worker; Gardener; Art teacher; Data entry job and Helper/assistance job
- Some key self-employment work suggested by the male respondents in order of importance includes Any petty shop/ business; E-rickshaw; Carpenter work; Car decoration work; Plumber; Artificial jewellery/gems business; Shoemaker; Photography; Printing; Blacksmith Work; Manufacturing; Pan shop; and Tea stall.
- Some key self-employment work suggested by the female respondents in order of importance includes Any petty shop/ business; manufacturing; E-rickshaw; Handicrafts, and car decoration work.

### Role of the State

- The Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959 was extended to the NCT of Delhi in 1960.
- Under this law, officials of the Social Welfare Department can conduct raids to pick up 'persons engaged in begging' then try them in special courts called 'beggar courts'. If convicted, they used to send to certified institutions called 'beggar homes' also known as 'Sewa Kutir' for a period ranging from one to ten years for detention, training and employment.
- The BPBA was decriminalizing by Delhi High Court in 2018. The court observed that BPBA provisions that treat begging as an offence, cannot withstand constitutional scrutiny. After, this the police cannot arrest anyone for begging.
- This also reflected from the survey that only 249 adults (1.2 per cent) including 165 males, 79 females, and 5 transgenders engaged in begging reported that they were convicted and sent to 'Sewa Kutir'.
- Eight out of ten people surveyed had some form of identification documents such as Aadhar card, educational certificate, ration card, birth certificate, voter identification card, bank account and others. However, majority of them had IDs registered in their native places.
- Some successful attempts have been made for the rehabilitation of children by the states like Bihar, Rajasthan and Odisha. They introduced state-level programmes for

rehabilitation of poor, destitute and homeless people such as community outreach campaigns, introduced rehabilitation schemes, implemented life skill and vocational training followed by job placement, engaged in recreational activities, opened up shelter homes, social welfare societies, issued ID proofs, helped in opening up bank accounts etc.

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings, this study makes some important recommendations that would help in the formulation of effective strategies and an implementation plan for the rehabilitation of people engaged in begging in NCT Delhi. Following the survey, a comprehensive approach as per the needs assessment of people engaged in begging is indispensable to address the problem of beggary. The approach should be a culmination of three components: (i) skill development and employment assistance approach, (ii) awareness and sensitisation approach and (iii) preventive approach. These recommendations cover various inputs received from stakeholders engaged in implementing welfare measures for the betterment of such people (Government, NGOs, CSOs, researchers and academicians). While planning for an intervention, underlying factors and the kind of social assistance needed should be considered to ensure the effectiveness and long-term success of the rehabilitation policy.

For the formulation of a better implementation plan, the people engaged in begging can be divided into various groups such as those who beg due to their circumstances; those who are forced into begging; those for whom begging is a vocation or are content with their condition (able bodies); vulnerable people such as single women, children, old, disabled, those with ill-health and other vulnerable groups. The component of the suggestive comprehensive rehabilitation approach is discussed in the following sub-sections.

### *☞ Skill Development and Employment Assistance Approach*

#### *1) Relevant Skill Development Trainings for Wage and Self-Employment*

- Proper skill development training should be undertaken to help them start either wage or self-employed income-generating activities on their own. Skill development should be imparted according to their needs, physical capabilities and mental skills for their long-term sustenance. Soft skills such as computer literacy, language and workplace interpersonal skills relevant for the sector/trade should be made an

integral part of the skills training process. Apart from skilling them, efforts should be put to identify their existing skills and upgrade them through the training or providing refresher training.

- It has been commonly argued that one key drawback of vocational skill training provided for rehabilitation is loose market linkage. Petty things such as candle making are taught which is insufficient to earn enough earning except on special occasions. Such training is neither job oriented nor market-oriented. The consequence of such training is that they are left with no option but to fall prey to beggary again for survival. Subsequently, the entire reformation/rehabilitation process collapses. Hence, vocational skill training should be provided keeping the person's interest, market demand, employability and earnings potential in the market. Apart from employable skills, they should also be taught life and behavioural skills as most of them are uneducated and have struggled all their lives to just survive.

#### *2) Stipend and placement:*

- Monetary benefits or stipends should be provided for stimulating participation in skill development training, and post-training placement should be provided with institutions/companies offering competitive salaries to reduce dropout rates. Post-placement, relocation assistance could be provided to those who need to shift base.

#### *3) Residential training centres:*

- Residential training centres should be set up to overcome the challenge of hesitancy and financial constraint (wage loss) of travelling long distances to undertake training.

#### *4) Financial Assistance and Start Kit*

- For self-employment or entrepreneurship activities, after receiving the training, financial assistance and a start-up kit to kick-start any business activity is needed. For this purpose, potential people engaged in begging should be identified along with the trade they are interested in. They should be provided initial financial support in the form of seed money for procuring a start-up kit and initial investment for purchasing raw materials for entrepreneurship. They can be trained and linked

with Self Help Groups (SHG) to initiate income-generating activities.

#### *5) Emotional and Psychological Support*

- They also need emotional and psychological support during their rehabilitation process. For this purpose, rehabilitation centres should be set up with multiple service facilities including stay, medical support, counselling, personality development and soft skills development, etc., to transform them into productive and dignified human resources. In addition, some monthly honorariums should also be provided to them for their daily needs.
- Professional counselling should be provided to make sure they don't slip back into begging.

#### *6) Identity Proof*

- The field survey evidence posits that most of the people engaged in begging have been excluded from various flagship schemes, as they lacked Delhi-based addresses and identity proofs, such as ration cards. A new enrolment scheme should be introduced to cater to the need of these extremely marginalised individuals. They should be issued a smart multipurpose card through which they can be given priority for fellowships, employment, PDS, health services, different types of equipment, credit facilities and skill development initiatives under various flagship schemes.
- They should be covered under 'One Nation, One Ration card' and similarly a single card should be introduced across various social protection schemes, as the multiplicity of cards creates a barrier in availing benefits from different state and centre sponsored schemes. Universalisation of the pension scheme should also be looked into.

#### *7) Simplified procedures and schemes:*

- The overall procedural details and documentation process needs to be simplified keeping in mind the illiterate and homeless people who are without any identification card like Aadhar card, ration card, income certificate, address proof and/or bank account.

- To help people with such documentation, assist people with accessing schemes, and monitor the scheme, the government should make use of SHGs, NGOs, CSOs and other citizen groups.
- Schemes should also be made available offline, as many of the destitute and homeless may not have access to the internet and digital literacy to apply for the scheme online.
- There is a need to connect them with pension schemes and social protection schemes so that they can avail the benefits of the scheme.

#### 8) *Follow-ups*

- The trained people placed with different employers should be sensitised of their history and asked to respect such employees. Follow-up/mentoring sessions for up to one year should be in a place where both employer and employee can be provided with an intermediary person who can be contacted in case of an issue or concern.

### *☞ Preventive Approach*

The preventive approach is meant for restraining people from engaging in begging or alms-seeking activities. The foremost preventive action would be the eradication of mass poverty.

#### 1) *Assistance to the Poorest*

- The poor households very often engage their children in begging to manage their livelihood. To hold back this vicious cycle, such parents should be compensated financially for sending their children to school. The adult member can be issued a special identity card through which they can avail some work from flagship schemes like urban livelihood schemes. These people should also be given free ration facilities under the Public Distribution System (PDS) and shelter through Prime Minister Awas Yojana.

#### 2) *Support to Vulnerable (Disable/Old-Aged/Diseased)*

- The vulnerable people who are at risk or engaged in begging due to their physical or mental disability, old-age, ill-health, and widow/separated etc., require special care and attention such as safe shelter, food, clothing, and health or medical services. They should be sent to shelter homes or old-age homes with necessary facilities and be provided financial assistance through the existing welfare schemes such as Indira

Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) etc.

### *3) Support to School Going Children*

- Education should be provided to all children. Children engaged in begging should be provided scholarships and hostel facilities so that they can get an adequate education. There is a provision of scholarship/hostel facilities for children from low-income families, both at pre-and post-matriculation or post-secondary stages in government and private schools and others. In this direction, ICDS services and such other schemes can be linked to regular schools, so that children can move out of beggary and lead a better life.

### *4) Support to Shelterless*

- Since around 55 per cent of the people engaged in begging are shelterless and vulnerable, they need to be accommodated in specially constructed shelter homes in areas with availability of adequate livelihood opportunities and access to basic facilities water, toilets, etc, so that they can lead a dignified life. Shelter homes should largely focus on three key aspects: cleanliness, safety and special needs of women, children and differently-abled people.

## **☞ Awareness, Sensitisation and Counseling Approach**

At present, there is a lack of adequate community action and counselling to help eradicate beggary from our society.

### *1) Sensitize and adopt the Whole of society approach*

- There is a need to change the orientation of the society at the way they perceive such people. This can be done by adopting a pan society orientation change attitude.
- It is observed that only government agencies and some civil society organisations are bothered about the eradication of beggary from society. Other members of our society as stakeholders are least concerned with this complex social problem. Involvement of community, NGOs and even corporate sector is very much necessary to eradicate beggary. Sensitisation of the beggars about the schemes and programmes available for them can also be undertaken through the active

involvement of the community.

- Authorities need to be more supportive in terms of allowing them to sell from their small outlets, street vending or continue with an alternate source of livelihood being pursued by them.

## *2) Institutionalize Religious Donations*

- Religious donations given by people should be institutionalised to those organisations that are already working for the betterment of people engaged in begging.

## *3) Counseling Parents and Other Children*

- Counselling services are required for children as well as parents who are engaged in begging. This can help parents overcome social taboos and realise that they, as parents, are not alone. Additionally, existing forums and institutions such as the Anganwadi Centres, Self-Help Groups, Schools and Civil Society Organisations should be oriented on these issues and should be engaged in providing information to parents, children and the society at large. Financial assistance should also be provided to the parents of children engaged in begging to support them in successfully bringing up their children against existing societal intolerance, stigma, discrimination and violence.

## *4) Establish Outreach and Mobilization unit*

- An outreach and mobilisation unit should be established to regularly monitor and identify people engaged in begging and to provide intensive counselling. The unit should ensure access to necessities to all those engaged in begging and also help them link with different existing welfare schemes and programmes of the government. This mobilisation unit could also ensure the participation of NGOs, and the corporate sector (CSR fund) in the process of rehabilitation of the people engaged in begging.

## *4) Convergence and Synergy among various Stakeholders*

- The issue concerning beggary is a cross-cutting problem for many line departments and several officers and staff of the Department of Social Welfare and other



departments who are involved in providing different welfare services to the people engaged in begging. Many of the departments and employees face difficulty in properly implementing the relevant schemes due to lack of adequate basic knowledge and information of problems and issues concerning beggary. Stakeholders (NGOs, corporates, and media, ward members) and government departments (social welfare, health, education, Municipal Corporation and police etc.) should be sensitised for the convergence and successful implementation of the relevant schemes. Convergence of all the departments such as DUSIB, WCD, Labour Welfare Department and others working for the welfare of the deprived sections of the society is needed for the betterment of persons engaged in begging.

- This will help in convergence and synergy among various development schemes for beggary such as shelter, food, identification, old/disabled/widow pension, vocational training, enrolment in schools and scholarship to children etc.

#### *5) Use of IEC materials and campaigns*

- For sensitisation, various activities and materials such as IEC materials (print/electronic), organisation of fairs, publication of a newsletter, TV/print media/social media publicity, poster/banners, cultural shows/street play and other awareness activities can be organised. These awareness programmes will help in engaging with such people with respect and provide them with the dignity that they deserve as human beings.
- The community can also be educated on various facets of beggary through sensitisation programmes and campaigns on TV, radio and other social media platforms.
- Social and behavioural communication campaigns should be adopted not just for people engaged in begging but also for those working with them. Sensitisation towards persons engaged in begging is a must to ensure life with dignity and a discrimination-free environment.

#### *Building trust*

- In order to overcome the trust deficit, there is a need to handhold people engaged in begging through NGOs, CSOs and the development of linkages with existing bodies

and schemes.

#### *Lessons from other Successful Initiatives*

- The successful initiatives of 'Koshish' and welfare schemes implemented by several state governments such as Bihar, Rajasthan and Odisha should be taken into consideration while planning for the implementation of the rehabilitation scheme.

#### *Monitoring and moral support*

- There is a need for regular monitoring, counselling and moral support post-rehabilitation to sustain the new role. Such people who have spent years on the street find it very difficult to live in confined spaces. These people do not respond to rehabilitation, because they are used to a life without any rules of conduct or societal norms.
- During the rehabilitation programme, they may not respond favourably and may feel uncomfortable in constrained spaces and following rules of conduct. They require consistent support and monitoring to retain the new role. Thus, the responsibility of the rehabilitation centre should not be limited to only training and employment, but also include monitoring and moral support for some extended time period to sustain them in their new roles.