

**DESTITUTE CHILDREN IN THE CHILDREN HOMES OF IMPHAL-WEST :  
A CASE STUDY****Tomba Chingtham**

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**Abstract**

*The present investigation aims to study the contribution of the areas related to the Destitute Children in the Children Homes of Imphal. This paper attempts to make a thorough, comprehensive and analytical study by exploring the causes of becoming destitute children, their educational facilities, fooding facilities, clothing facilities, health care system of the destitute children provided by the Children Homes. From the results of the research the causes of becoming destitute child are broken families, AIDS victim parents, extremely poor and helpless single parent or both parents, parent(s) died of illness other than AIDS, insurgency problems, parent(s) died either in an accident or committed suicide and also abandoned by parents. The findings may help to improve the conditions of educational facilities, fooding facilities, clothing facilities, and health care system of the destitute children provided by the Children Homes.*

**Key words :** *Destitute, children, destitute children, children homes, Imphal, Manipur*

Children constitute the most vulnerable section of society and are considered a supremely important asset of our nation. Safe-guarding the rights of our children is the primary responsibility of each and every individual member of the society. Besides the co-ordination and co-operation amongst the different Child Line Departments of the state and Central Government, the responsibility need not be fixed to only one category, community or group. It is therefore, incumbent on us to work towards ensuring security to children during their childhood days. Any child who is not getting proper care even if his/her parents are alive, e.g. father is a criminal and is in jail and mother is not well so there is no one to take care of the child, so the child will be called as destitute child. Quite a substantial portion of our population is economically deprived and socially incapacitated. Therefore, children are always in need of protection within the conditions under which they live.

Destitution is an economic, social and political phenomenon. The very poorest of the poor people are destitute and are socially expelled. For survival, each human being requires income or transfers of food, clothing and medicine. Majority of destitute acquire these resources from begging and various types of dirty labour work that are rejected by the casual wage labour force. They also involved in theft and worked in the illegal distribution of legal and illegal goods such as hard drugs. Especially for elderly destitute and disabled people, orphaned and abused children, mentally ill, etc. begging is the only option. Children are increasingly becoming destitute and orphans as parents lose their lives to AIDS, a devastating consequence of substance abuse. Children subjected to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglected are at risk of shortened lives, poor parenting skills later in life, homelessness, vagrancy displacement. Conversely, successful protection increases a child's chances to grow up physically and mentally healthy, confident and self respecting and less likely to abuse or exploit others, including his or her own children.

The Vision envisaged in the constitution of India of a happy,

healthy, joyful and literate childhood seems to be distant dream in the contemporary status of children in India. In Manipur, the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur has made significant contributions in the last decade in assuring children their rights to survival, protection, development and participation. Despite the efforts many children are still forced into a life of drudgery and labour. And a lot more is still required to be done to improve the status of our children to acceptable levels. Hence, there is a need of study on destitute children in the children Homes of Manipur. So, the present venture has been made to study on destitute children in the Children Homes of Imphal-West District.

**Objectives**

To find out the causes of becoming destitute children in the Children Homes.

To study the educational facilities provided to the destitute children by the Children Homes.

To find out the fooding facilities provided to the destitute children by the Children Homes.

To find out the clothing facilities provided to the destitute children by the Children Homes.

To study the health care system provided to the destitute children by the Children Homes.

**Methods**

The present study was conducted through survey method of research on the purposive sample of 100 destitute children selected from 4 (four) Children Homes of Imphal-West district of Manipur. The sample comprised of 40 children from Destitute Children Home, Tera Keithel, Sagolband, 27 children from Destitute Children Home Manipur Mahila Samiti, Dewlahland, 18 children from Government Children Home, Takyel, 15 children from Punya Shelter Home for Girls, Thangmeiband Yumnam Leikai. The tools for the study were used questionnaire which was developed by investigator himself keeping into account the various aspects of destitute children. The data are interpreted in term of percentage.

## Results and Discussion

### 1: Causes of Becoming Destitute Child.

Table 1

N = 100

Sl. No.	Causes	Number	Percentage
1.	Broken families	23	23 %
2.	AIDS Victim parents	18	18 %
3.	Extremely poor and helpless single parent or both parents	21	21 %
4.	Parent(s) died of illness other than AIDS	18	18 %
5.	Insurgency problems	9	9 %
6.	Parent(s) died either in an accident or committed suicide	8	8 %
7.	Abandoned by parents	3	3 %

While studying the causes of becoming destitute child, it was found that 23 % of destitute children were resulted from broken families. 18 % either both parents or one of the parents died of AIDS. 21 % were resulted from extremely poor and helpless single parent i.e. one of the parents is not alive or both parents are alive but due to extreme poverty and helplessness they cannot afford their child and finally they are kept in the Destitute Homes. Another 18 % either both the parents or one of the parents died of illness other than AIDS such as drinking, heart attack, cancer or some unknown diseases. 9 % insurgency problems was the cause of their destitution (either because the parents were killed by the underground people (UG) or father joined UG and left home and mother died of diseases or mother stayed at her paternal house and so on. 8 % either the parent(s) died in an accident or committed suicide. And 3 % were abandoned by their parents just after birth so they became destitute.

### 2 : Educational Facilities of the Destitute Children

On being enquired about the Educational facilities of destitute children provided by the Children Homes, it was found that 90 % respondents are satisfied with the educational facilities provided by the Children Home while the remaining 10 % feel the need to change the Educational facilities. 76 % of the children are sent in the Government schools and the rest 24 % are sent in the Private schools. Those studying in the Government schools expressed their desire to study in the Private schools as Private schools are far better than the Government school. Cent percent of the children are given private coaching by the entire Homes. Only those children of the higher classes who are academically sound are sent to specialized teachers for private coaching outside the Homes. 100 % respondents are given sufficient time for studies, home – assignments and special programmes on Sundays/holidays are also arranged for them and are given facilities for recreation, games, sports, watching T.V etc. 57 % of the children got the opportunity to play and mingle with children of the locality while the remaining 43 % did not get their opportunity. 55 %

received vocational training programmes which would be helpful in generating an income in their future life while remaining 45 % did not received vocational training programmes.

### 3 : Fooding Facilities of the Destitute Children

While studying the fooding facilities of the destitute children in the Children Homes, it was found that 95 % of the children considered the fooding facilities satisfactory while the remaining 5 % responded negatively. 100 % said that they are given meals 2 times in a day and also provided breakfast in the morning before going to school and tea in the evening after returning back from school. 95 % said that they are given meat or fish once in a week while the remaining 5 % said that there were times where no meat or fish was given in a week.

### 4 : Clothing Facilities of the Destitute Children

While studying about clothing facilities of the destitute children in the Children Homes, it was found that 90% are satisfied with the clothing facilities provided by the Children Homes and they are also provided with proper school uniforms and sufficient warm clothes for winter and they have nice clothes for festivals while the remaining 10 % responded negatively to the above queries. 100 % of destitute children told that they were taught to mend and stitch their own clothes. 97 % said that they wash their own clothes and the remaining 3 % being very small, their clothes are washed by the care-takers.

### 5 : Health Care System of the Destitute Children

While studying the health care system of the destitute children, it was found that 76 % are satisfied with the health care system provided by the Children Homes and they also received proper treatment and medication when they fall ill while the remaining 24 % desired for improving the health care system and they want better treatment and medication when they fall ill.

### Conclusion and Suggestions

Broken families created the highest number of destitute children. This implies that the marital bonds/ relations in the society are degrading. Poverty and helpless single parent ranks second in creating a large number of destitute children. This implies that the financial conditions of the single parent are extremely weak to afford their own children. AIDS is dreadful sexually transmitted diseases which kills the lives of many parents thus leaving their children as destitute. Another important casual factor for destitute children is that either both the parents or one of the parents died of illness other than AIDS such as drinking, heart attack, cancer or some unknown diseases. Insurgency problems is another for child destitution where the parents were killed by the underground people (UG) or father joined UG and left home and mother died of diseases or mother stayed at her paternal house. Another factor responsible for child destitute is that parent(s) died either by accident or committed suicide. The poor parents (daily wages earners) in their venture to earn their livelihood, they met accident and died. Some parent(s) committed suicide due to lost of mutual trust and relationship and overburdened by the fam-

ily problems. Abandoned by parents just after birth leads to child destitution rarely. Regarding educational facilities, majority of the children are sent in the Government schools and they expressed their desire to study in the Private schools as Private schools are far better than the Government schools. All the Children of Homes are first sent in the Government schools. If they are good in their academic performance then they are sent to Private schools. If the children are not doing well in their studies then they are again sent back to the Government schools. This technique serves as a kind of motivation among the children to do their studies well. All the Homes arrange private coaching for all the children by maintaining paid tutors. But arrangement of subject expert teachers inside the Homes is not seen as it is very expensive. Some of the Destitute Home allowed the children to play within the premises of the Home only. These children expressed their desire to play and mingle with children of the locality in the local playgrounds. Vocational training programmes are not arranged in some of the Homes. Children in these Homes expressed their desire to undergo vocational programmes which would help them to generate an income in their future life. Regarding fooding facilities, almost all the respondents are satisfied with the fooding facilities that are being provided by the Homes. Only a few children expressed their desire for better fooding facilities. Almost all the children in the Destitute Homes are satisfied with the clothing facilities provided to them. Only a few children face some inconveniences which should not be neglected. Majority of the destitute children are satisfied with the health care system provided by the children Homes but some of them expressed the need for improving the health care system with better facilities.

**Based on the above situations, it is suggested to improve their conditions and to enable eradication of destitute children in our society.**

The highest number of destitute children were resulted from broken families i.e. the parents were divorced or remarried to another person. This is a sign of degradation of marital bonds in the society. So, the curriculum of school subjects should include lessons on Marriage Life beginning from High School onwards. Children should be taught when and how to prepare for a holy marriage, to choose the right person as Life-partner, to marry at the right age, to remain faithful and loyal to each other, both in times of joys and sorrows till death, to build up mutual trust and understanding, to be co-operative and helpful to each other. Above all to have a regular source of income before getting married because maintenance of a good family requires a sound economy. Often most of the family problems arise from financial crisis. Education on such family matters would help to reduce the case of broken families thereby reducing the number of destitute children. Family counselling centres equipped with well-experienced experts should be opened in all the districts of Manipur to give counselling to the couples with problems and to arrive at an ac-

ceptable solution. This measure may also help to prevent the case of broken families. Poverty and helpless single parents is another factor for child destitution. It would be good if the Government make policies to give financial assistance not only to the widows but also to the widowers on a monthly basis. This would help them to afford their children. Community mobilization and awareness programmes about HIV/AIDS should be held from time to time to educate the masses about HIV/AIDS and its serious consequences. Another suggestion to prevent child destitution is to minimize insurgency problems in the state. The State Government should provide some kind of special assistance those who are left home and joined underground. And they should be provided with suitable job (employment) facilities to enable them to come back to normal life and stay together with their children. Majority of the destitute children expressed their opinion that Private schools are far better than Government schools. This attitude would be changed if the Government schools should be provided all the facilities that are found in the Private schools. Destitute Home should allow the children to play with the local children at least once or twice a week, if not every day. It may help to dispel their inferior complex and develop more confidence in themselves. This would create a happy atmosphere for the children. It would be good if vocational training programmes be made compulsory in all the children Homes. This would help the children to generate an income in their future life. Proper treatment and medication was available to the children when they fall ill. But it needs further improvement with better facilities. Some of the children are found lacking proper school uniforms as they wait for supplies by the schools under SSA. And they are also not having sufficient warm clothes for winter and nice clothes for festivals. These inconveniences calls for the attention of the concerned authorities. They should not be neglected.

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