

## THE VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN BY CINI ASHA

CINI ASHA initiated its outreach programme since 1993 in addition to the other existing programmes being focused on the children who were potential child labourers i.e. the children in the age group of 5-14 years who were out of school living in the slums and squatter colonies. These children who were either at work or busy playing, gambling, doing domestic work, entertaining themselves through various means and basically roaming around aimlessly. They were adding to the number of illiterate population of the city each day. Thus emerged the concept of **preparatory centres** which aimed for the following:

- \* Where the over aged children were prepared to be mainstreamed into formal schools in age appropriate classes.
- \* A preparatory centre can only be started when there is a govt. sponsored/aided school that has vacancy for the children to be mainstreamed.
- \* This also enabled CINI ASHA to design its innovative Bridge Course, an accelerated learning method to facilitate the process of mainstreaming over aged out of school children into formal schools.

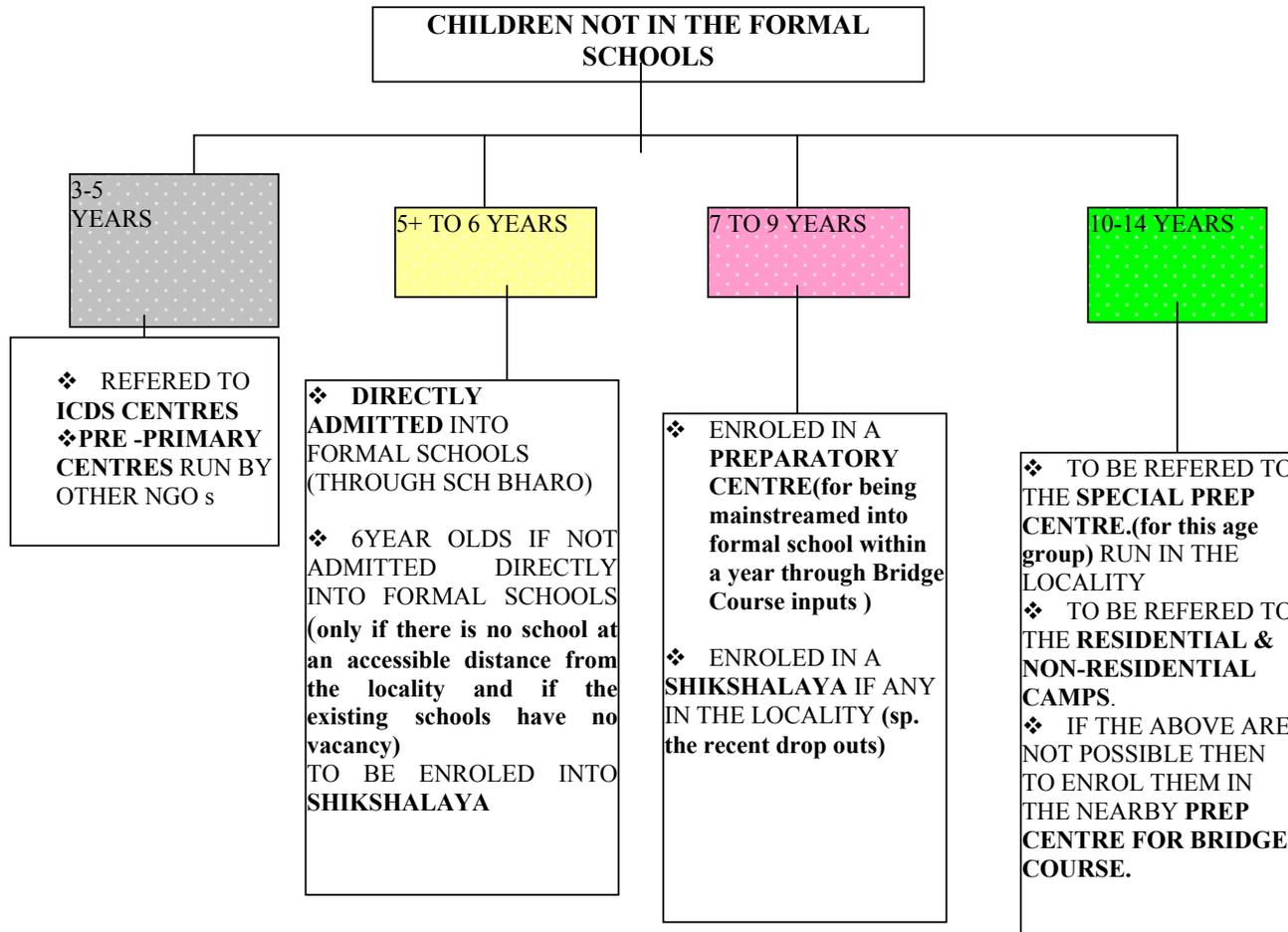
Though until last year around 8000 children could be mainstreamed through its various programmes into formal schools one significant problem that emerged from the experience of mainstreaming children was that of *Access to the Formal Schools*. Thus CINI ASHA along with other NGOs and the government promoted the concept of **Shikshalaya Prakalpa**. The Prakalpa is running alternative primary schools for the children in the age group of 5-9 years by the NGOs that would be recognized by the government with the objective of universalizing primary education for all children. Thus starting from August, 2001, 17,000 children have been ensured access to primary school. A **Shikshalaya is justified** under the following circumstances:

- \* There are children out of school in the age group of 5-9 years.
- \* There is no school at an accessible distance from a locality or there is no vacancy in the existing schools in the area.

CINI ASHA had been managing the Project management Unit for the entire programme for one year that has led to enrich our experience in working with the deprived urban children.

The changing urban scenario is relevant to the education status of the children, and the various interventions made targeting the children would require an **age specific approach** that would also work to design strategies effectively to reach out to these children. Therefore, a **need assessment study covering 30000 families in 13 Municipal wards** of the city was conducted. This was done with the objectives of having an **updated knowledge** of the educational status of children and to **work out effective strategies** to reinforce the target of ensuring education to all children. The 'Ankur' cards issued to all children out of school were in three colours; Yellow, Pink and Green with a message related to each target group. The yellow card was meant for children in the age group of 5-6 years which would enable them to seek direct admission in the local formal school while the pink card and the green card were meant for children in the age group of 7-9 years and 10-14 years respectively and through these cards children were referred to the education centres like the preparatory centre, special preparatory centre and non residential camps..

This has finally enabled the out reach programme to design effective strategies for children in all age groups as explained below:



**Coaching support** : Apart from the above mentioned programmes focus would remain on giving back up support to the children already mainstreamed into formal schools. It has been experienced that this is the most effective approach to retain children in the formal schools. The volunteers would also be trained to effectively deliver this support to the children.

**Educational support to the children at the upper primary level:** It has been experienced that due to the large hidden cost of education at this level parents and the children loose the motivation to continue education and drop out and turn to other options like work, marriage (sp. for girls) etc. Thus support would be given to children reaching class V and above after analyzing each case to enable them to continue in the secondary schools until they complete their school final examination. These children would in turn create a tremendous resource and motivation in the community ensuring the need of compulsory education for all children.