



## **ASIA/INDIA - Hundreds of children survive behind the train station in Varanasi, victims of abuse and exploitation**

Varanasi (Agenzia Fides) - Hundreds of children live and roam every day behind the train station in Varanasi, Uttar - Pradesh, in the north of the Country, crossed daily by more than 300,000 passengers. Behind lies Charbhuj Shahid, a monstrous slum immersed in mud where 200 families live in huts made of trash and where young children are abused, neglected and exploited. This is reported by Sister Manju, of the Indian Service of Missions and co-founder, together with father Abhishiktanand, of DARE, the first and only NGO that has managed to enter into this urban slum where there is extreme poverty and where people live in stolen vehicles and semi-trailers that they use as a shelter, children who are lost or who are alone, abandoned, fled, rejected because suffering from some disability or for the mere fact of being female. The young ones earn their living by picking up trash and debris, begging, stealing or submitting to sexual abuse by domestic tourists and occasional visitors. In Charbhuj Shahid, says Sister Manju, these children collect garbage, fill water bottles and sell them. Currently the DARE center, opened in 2010, 8 kilometers from Varanasi, accepts only girls, and there are about thirty. Others can stay there to play, learn, relax for a few hours. The nun is not viewed highly especially by parents who exploit children, because she tries to save them instead.

The objective of DARE is, however, to build a new center and to have more space. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 16/10/2013 )