

Countess of children's rights

By **Sujata B. Shakeel**
in New Delhi

ACCOMPANYING President Nicolas Sarkozy on his maiden India visit, Countess Albina du Boisrouvray is a vocal advocate of children's rights. And she uses her 18th visit to the country to reiterate her concern about India's AIDS orphans, whom she calls the "collateral damage of the disease".

"This trip is a poignant opportunity to highlight the challenges facing millions of children who have been left behind by AIDS in India and in poor countries across the developing world. They are becoming a discarded generation. And we need to take up the challenge of restoring to them their basic rights and facilities," she says.

"I shall ask President Sarkozy to allocate 10 per cent of HIV/AIDS funding to orphans and vulnerable children in India," says du Boisrouvray.

Founder and president of Francois-Xavier Bagnoud International (FXB), one of the first international NGOs to work on the AIDS orphan crisis around the world, Albina du Boisrouvray has been described as an "alchemist" who turned private grief over the death of her son and personal wealth into loving care for abandoned children and the 100 million AIDS orphans expected in this decade.

The countess set up FXB offices in Goa and Rajasthan in 1991. Today, FXB is the only European

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Albina du Boisrouvray.

NGO working with HIV/AIDS in all 32 states and Union Territories of India, which du Boisrouvray describes as "32 countries woven into one".

The FXB India Suraksha, the Indian chapter of the NGO, is working extensively at Delhi's Sanjay Camp and has recently launched the FXB Railway Platform Children Programme in Jaipur. The programme exclusively targets children who live on the platforms by providing them with housing, education, food, lessons in hygiene, de-addiction and most importantly a hope that with education, they can make something of their lives.

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