

BALAKNAMA

UNIQUE NEWSPAPER FOR AND BY STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN

Balaknama is the newspaper presented by Street and Working children themselves to fight for their own rights and problems because they are being completely ignored.

ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS BRING SMILES TO STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S FACES

Reporter -Sarita, Hansraj, Kajal, Kishan, and Rajkishor

Children and adults nowadays, wherever they go, people, relatives, or neighbors are eager to know about their well-being and then inquire about their education, how much education they have received or are currently receiving. Everyone knows the importance of education in our lives; education is a very good and necessary tool for our bright future. By using this tool of education in our lives, we can achieve anything. A high level of education helps in social and family respect for people and creates a separate identity. Education gives us new knowledge, the ability to think, and wisdom, or obtaining education is considered important in everyone's life. But are everyone's problems the same in life? Everyone knows that everyone's problems are different. Most of the problems are faced by street and working children. These children have to deal with a new problem every day. However, while facing these problems, most street and working children are moving towards education. In the current year, after taking their annual exams, street and working children are passing with good marks. In this regard, reporters from Balaknama have talked to

them about their thoughts and their exam scores.

When reporters reached the settlement in Sector 78 of Noida, they met a 13-year-old girl and asked her which class she is currently attending. The girl explained that "They used to live in village in Bihar before, and now they live in Sector 78 of Noida. When we were in the village, the Corona epidemic was going on, and we ran out of money for food in the village. That's why during that time, we came to Noida. We thought we would find some work in Noida, but here too, we were dependent on others for food. I was receiving education in class 3rd in the village, but unfortunately, I couldn't take the exam, and then I came to Noida with parents. A few days later, the lockdown was imposed, and because of that, I couldn't continue our education. However, during the Corona pandemic, I used to attend nearby tuition classes and study there so that we wouldn't forget what we had learned and also to learn more. After the Corona epidemic, I met the workers of the Chetna NGO in the settlement, and they asked us whether we were studying or not. Then I told them our whole story, and then I started going to the education centre of the Chetna NGO daily for study. And then a few months



later, they admitted me in class 6th in a government school. Now you might be wondering how I reached Class 6 after leaving education in 3rd? The school teacher took my exam to see how much knowledge I had, and I wrote everything well and explained everything properly, so the teacher praised me. This way, based on my age, I got admission to Class 6 of the government school, and I focused on studying in Class 6 and also took the exam. As a result, I scored 670 out of 1000 points. When I was taking the class 6th exam, I was also afraid that I hadn't studied for so many years, but would I pass now? But ultimately, my fear was unfounded, and I succeeded because I also attended tuition classes, which helped me study better, and

that's why the teacher also praised me."

When reporters spoke to Ali (changed name) residing in the Zakheera settlement in Delhi, he shared that "I am currently 13 years old and we have been living in Delhi with my parents for 6 years. My parents work in a factory. We used to live in the village before, but there was not much work there, and initially, we used to go to school there too. However, after a few months, we stopped going to school because the education quality was not good in the school, which is why my father brought us to Delhi. Now I have given the class 6th exam, and in this exam, I scored 442 out of 700 marks. These marks are the highest in our class, and I secured the first position in

the class. Seeing these marks, I felt very happy, and most of the other children in the class scored less than 300 marks. My parents are also pleased with these marks. I believe that acquiring education is important. A person with education can move from one place to another without fear, and education also increases knowledge. Therefore, obtaining education is extremely important for all of us."

Now let's head towards Gurugram. Balaknama reporters conversation with Abhishek revealed that he is 12 years old and resides in Badshahpur. Originally from Bihar, he currently lives here. He has been living in his hut here for almost 5 years now. Initially, when he lived in the village, life was very difficult for him. There was a mud house, and his parents had no employment, making it very challenging for them to arrange even one meal a day, let alone a full stomach. After struggling with these problems, his uncle advised them to come and live in Badshahpur with them. He assured them that they would find good employment there, and they would be able to take care of their family and educate their children properly. Abhishek's mother now works as a domestic
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THE APPREHENSION OF DISPLACING CHILDREN FROM THEIR MAKESHIFT SETTLEMENTS

Bureau Report

Fear is something that haunts us in life for one reason or another, whether it's about financial situations, physical conditions, or any other circumstance. When reporters visited the settlements of children residing in Noida Sector 101 to inquire about their well-being, the children expressed that they are currently quite fearful. As you also come every month to ask about our well-being, you see that we always remain happy living in the shanty. There are approximately 200 shanties in this area, divided into three sections, all within Sector 101. Some sections have 100 shanties, some have 50, and some have 50 shanties respectively, and the contractors for these shanties are different. Although the place where we are living is government



property, the contractor charges us rent for the shanty. The rent depends on the size of the shanty; if there

are two shanties' space, then it costs Rs. 3000 per month, and if there is space for one shanty, then it costs Rs. 1500 per month. The contractor receives his payments on time, but the biggest issue is that a few days ago, authorities visited the contractor and gave him a week's notice, saying they would return, which is causing us a lot of worry because we're wondering how we will suddenly vacate the shanty? No one has vacated a shanty in this settlement yet, and a week has passed since then, but the authorities haven't returned yet. Now, we are all afraid that if they suddenly show up, it will be difficult to remove our belongings from the shanty. The contractor says we'll see when they come, and the children mentioned that then we will be forced to find a new place to live by renting rooms somewhere else.

CONCERNED CHILDREN HAVE ERECTED WALLS AROUND THE CEMETERY FOR SAFETY

Balaknama Reporter Kishan

Some places have certain characteristics that give away their nature upon sight, but often there's nothing to indicate anything about a place. This is why sometimes, unaware, ordinary people keep passing through those places, and sometimes, finding desolate areas, they even relieve themselves there. When balaknama reporters arrived in Mahagun Village, Noida, for coverage and were exploring, they stumbled upon a place where there was danger, namely, a cemetery. It was quite large and sprawling. As the journalists stood there contemplating, suddenly, they were spotted by several people who called them over. The journalists were a bit startled at first, but eventually

gathered the courage and went into the shanties adjacent to the cemetery and talked to the children living there about this matter. The journalists first introduced themselves to the children and then narrated the entire sequence of events. Then, a girl explained in detail that just like how they had unknowingly strayed from the path, many people come and go mistaking it for a forest, but there's a road adjacent to it. We children live in this settlement, so we also feel fear being close to it. Some new people had come to live in our settlement, and there was also a 14-year-old girl with them. It had been two months since they came to this place. One day, when she wandered into this cemetery, from that



day onwards, a shadow of a ghost haunted her, and she started behaving strangely every day. When we found out about this, we informed her mother, and then her mother got an amulet made for her from a nearby Baba. Only then did she recover. Not only that, it is quite scary to come and go at night in this place; there's a market

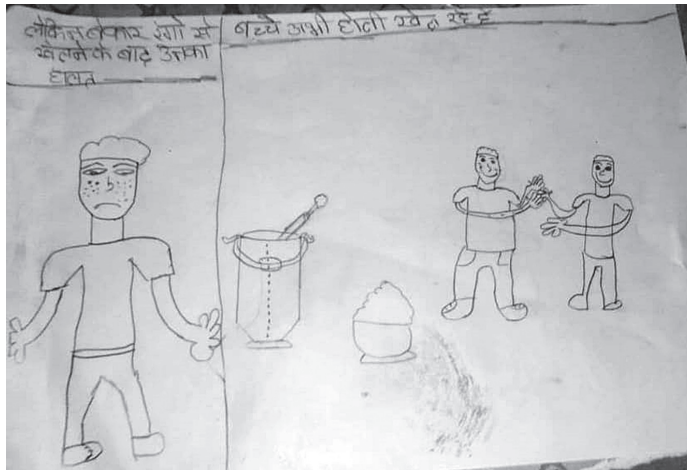
about five hundred meters ahead of our settlement, and it's quite dark in front of our settlement, and there are no streetlights either. Whenever we have to go out at night to buy vegetables or other items like milk, sugar, and flour, we have to run away from our settlement, and we keep running until we see light or until we see

someone coming and going. When we leave that place, it feels like someone is coming to catch us from behind, or someone is pulling our legs, and there's also a strong wind blowing, so many questions arise in the mind. When we run, we often fall in the dark. Not only do we come and go from this place, but the villagers also come and go at night from this place, but no one pays much attention to it to take any action. We want that as many places as there are cemeteries, boundaries should be erected from all sides, and it should be written in front of the boundary that this is a cemetery. In this way, any unfamiliar person should think before entering, and such unpleasant incidents as those that happened with the journalists should not occur.

CHILDREN CONTRACTED SKIN INFECTIONS FROM PLAYING HOLI WITH CONTAMINATED COLORS

Local Reporter - Anjali,
Balaknama Reporter - Hans
Kumar

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar Shivaji Park Slum in West Delhi, the local reporter Anjali informed them that the festival of Holi has brought increased distress to the area due to the use of contaminated colors. Some children have experienced discoloration of their faces, while others are suffering from rashes and other skin ailments. People in the area are facing considerable discomfort due to skin-related diseases. Although Holi was celebrated with great enthusiasm, people of all age



groups, including children, youth, and the elderly, enjoyed the festival to the fullest, but many are now facing troubles due to adulterated colors,

with children being the most affected. One local child had permanent color applied to his face, which persisted for a long time, and though it washed off

eventually, it left rashes on his entire face. Similarly, a girl is also distressed as her face turned red due to adulterated colors. The market during Holi sees the highest sales of adulterated colors and abirgual. Amidst the hustle and bustle, people often overlook safety concerns. Chemical-laden grit is used to enhance the shine of these colors, and various chemicals are also found in them. Since our skin is highly sensitive, the use of chemical colors causes more damage, especially to the face. Instances of itching, redness of the skin, peeling, and maximum cases of rashes are being reported due to the use of adulterated colors.

Compared to previous years, people are more aware of the dangers of chemical-laden colors this year, and there's also a trend towards herbal colors. However, due to their higher prices, these are not accessible to the poor living in slums. Additionally, some mischievous elements continue to use adulterated colors without any restraint, causing eye infections among many. Some shopkeepers here, lured by small profits, sell adulterated colors without any hesitation. It is essential for the administration to take strict action against the business of adulterated colors to prevent its sale in the future.

ANNUAL EXAMINATION RESULTS BRING SMILES TO STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S FACES

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helper in other households, and his father works as a laborer. In his family, there are two sisters, a younger brother, and their parents. Both sisters go to school, while the younger brother stays at home. Since his mother goes out to work, Abhishek had to take responsibility for his younger brother, which prevented him from going to school. However, after being convinced by the NGO workers, he enrolled in 5th grade in 2023. Now he has promoted in 6th grade and has scored 890 out of 1000 marks, passing the exam. Abhishek is now very happy, and his happiness knows no bounds. Previously, when he didn't go to school, he used to take care of his younger brother and help with household chores, but

now he attends school.

When reporters spoke to Danish, who lives in Chuna Bhatti area of Delhi, he shared, "I am currently nine years old. I don't like to talk much, so I remain very quiet even in school. I live in slum on rent with my grandmother and my elder brothers. I go to school every day, and I have taken the exam for the first grade. The exam was out of 600 marks, and I scored 479 marks. I have secured the first position in my class, and I am quite happy about it. I want to keep studying like this and progress in life. I also want to advise everyone that if we have education, we can fight any battle. That's why it's very important to receive education."

Reporters met a young girl in the slums of Noida and

discussed education with her. She explained, "I live in rented rooms in Noida with my parents. I am 13 years old, and I go to school every day. I really enjoy going to school, and I never take a day off, which earns me praise from my teachers. I am currently in the fourth grade. I have taken the exam for the third grade and scored 89% out of 100%, which makes me very happy. I urge everyone that education is important for all, and by acquiring education, we can make our identity."

While meeting with the street children in slums of Badshahpur, Gurugram, an attempt was made to understand how hard they had worked to pass their exams. That's when Sayara shared, "We are originally from

Aligarh and currently reside in the settlements of Gurugram. There weren't good job opportunities in the village, and we come from a poor family, so we had to come to Gurugram. Back in the village, we didn't go to school; instead, we took care of our younger siblings. When we came to Gurugram, we saw many children going to school, and sometimes we also felt like experiencing it and seeing how it feels. When we discussed this with our father, he said that we were willing to educate

in the village too, but we had to take care of our sister there. However, here you will also take care of her after going to school first. After school, you will look after your younger sister, and your mother will stay at home. In this way, our father got us admitted to school. Now, I have taken the exam for the third grade and have reached the fourth grade, scoring 80% out of 100%. Seeing these marks, along with me, our parents are also quite happy."

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

**CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE
NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY
PROBLEM.**

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

CHILDREN SEEK REMOVAL OF OUTDOOR PORTABLE TOILETS DUE TO INCONVENIENCE AND POOR MAINTENANCE

Bureau Report

You are likely familiar with Noida, where restroom facilities are available approximately every kilometer. Before 2018, outdoor portable toilets were present, mainly in front of slum settlements, frequented by passersby and residents for restroom use. However, currently, they are no longer visible in significant numbers, as public toilets (Sulabh Shauchalay) have taken their place. During a visit to the slum settlements in Sector 76 of Noida, journalists

observed one such outdoor portable toilet. While it still exists, it is presently in a deteriorated and unclean state, with no maintenance attention. Children residing in the settlement shared their concerns, stating that these toilets used to be heavily used, but now everyone uses the public toilets instead. There are no attendants near these toilets anymore, and they remain neglected and filthy. The doors of the two compartments of the outdoor portable toilets are broken, with three meals' worth of filth inside. Moreover, these



toilets are often used by small children from the slum

settlement, and sometimes, they use them on their own

without flushing afterward. Even adults engage in such behavior, especially during the night. Consequently, there is a pervasive foul odor, and exiting becomes challenging. In contrast, the public toilets outside our settlement are regularly maintained, with attendants present, and officials conduct inspections. However, they overlook these outdoor portable toilets. Considering that people are already using public toilets, these outdoor portable toilets should be removed because they lack water, gates, and maintenance.

EDUCATION BOOSTS SELF-CONFIDENCE IN STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN



Local Reporter - Abhishek Reporter - Sarita

When Balaknama reporter Sarita visited Goga Colony slum in Gurugram, Haryana, she conversed with a child named Abhishek (changed name), a 12-year-old originally from Bihar currently residing in Badshahpur Gurugram. Abhishek expressed, "I attend school every day because I

love studying. Previously, I couldn't go to school due to our financial situation, and I used to assist my father with work. But now, I attend school because the team members of CHETNA organization have enrolled me in school. Today, I am able to study because of the organization, and I believe that when I grow up, I will achieve something. Initially, going to school felt strange, but now I enjoy it because I

study with great interest, and all the teachers appreciate me, which makes me very happy. I want to become a doctor when I grow up because my mother is always unwell. Although she goes to work, she cannot work for long. Therefore, I will become a doctor and treat my mother. I also want to help poor people." When Sarita conversed with Abhishek, she commended him for being such a good child and for taking care of his parents. She advised him to continue studying diligently no matter the circumstances. To this, Abhishek replied, "I will always study with dedication and achieve the first position because I want to fulfill my dreams. It's not just a dream; it's also my passion to illuminate my parents' name, which will make them very proud."

CHILDREN ENGAGED IN STREET-RELATED OCCUPATIONS ASPIRE TO LEARN AND THRIVE

Reporter: Kishan

Facing challenges, children engaged in street-related work are progressing day by day towards work. They wish that if they are facing difficulties and have already started working, why not engage in such work that can become a significant endeavor for the future and start generating income from it. When Balaknama reporters spoke to Rita (changed name) from a neighborhood in Noida, she shared her story and explained the circumstances she is currently facing. She said, "I currently live in Noida with my aunt. There are five members in my house: my three brothers, one sister, father, and besides that, my mother has passed away. Because of this, I am currently living with my aunt.



When my mother was alive, I used to go to school at that time, but due to my mother's death, problems started arising at home. My brothers are also young, and I am the eldest in the house, along with my father. My father and two brothers live in the village, and I and one brother live with my aunt. Currently, I am learning sewing. I learn sewing from 2:00 to 5:00 in the afternoon and do household chores in the morning and take care of my aunt's children. Because of the absence of my mother, I have to work. Apart from this, I have to give ₹300 per month to learn sewing, which is currently given by my aunt. I am slowly learning to stitch suits, etc., and also practice at home. There is a machine at home too. When there is a mistake, I go to the sewing sister and show her, and then she tells me what the mistake is. I want to open my own shop after learning sewing and teach others as well, and sew people's clothes so that the household expenses can be managed, and I can also become successful."

CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN A LEADERSHIP TRAINING SESSION, ENGAGING IN DISCUSSIONS ON VARIOUS TOPICS

Balaknama Reporter - Hans Kumar

CHETNA organization and Balaknama editor Kishan organized a leadership training session in Keshavpuram (West Delhi) for local reporters and children from various neighborhoods, with a total of 19 participants. For the advancement of these children, leadership training sessions are organized every three months, involving leaders from all centers. The agenda for these sessions is thoughtfully designed to address various important topics, ensuring comprehensive education for all participants. All children introduced themselves,



followed by a discussion on the previous training session. Previous meeting topics were revisited, and then a deep conversation ensued regarding the three P's - Provision, Protection, and Participation. Some

questions were posed to the children, to which they responded excellently. Subsequently, discussions were held regarding UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and children's rights. All

participants then engaged in a quiz focusing on UNCRC and children's rights. Afterward, discussions were held on the Bal Nam newspaper, Bal Kanama, where the correct method of finding news and writing it was taught, along with discussions on various related issues. Following the training, all participants provided their feedback. The children then had their meals and returned to their respective areas.

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THE CHILD ABANDONED CHILD LABOR AND EMBRACED THE PATH OF EDUCATION



Local Reporter- Vijay
Balaknama Reporter-Kajal

As part of her investigative reporting, reporter Kajal visited various slums in Jaipur. During her visit, she spoke with children on the streets and those engaged in labor. It was during this interaction that 11-year-old Vijay (name

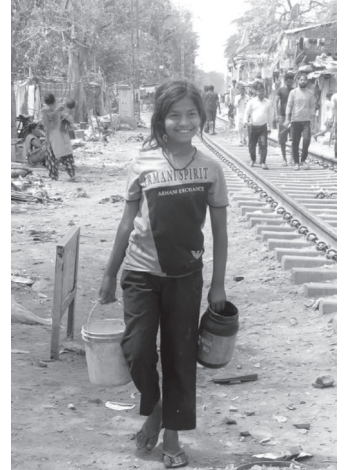
changed) shared that for many days, team members from the Chetna organization had been teaching children in their slum. One day, he was also called to the center, where he witnessed various activities taking place, which he found very appealing. Many children at the center were like him. The Chetna workers spoke to my parents,

but my father sent them back, saying that many people come to the slum, work for two to three months, and then disappear. Vijay mentioned that earlier, he used to wake up early in the morning and go scavenging with either his parents or the children's group. There was no routine for eating, drinking, bathing, or washing, and in the evening, selling scavenged items and earning some money for food was the only routine. But gradually, he stopped scavenging and started coming to the Chetna center. The workers at Chetna then informed my parents about my curiosity towards education and took their consent for school admission. At the Chetna center, along with education, I learned about child rights, and leadership qualities, and today I am very happy because I have also been admitted to school.

WATER CRISIS CAUSES ILLNESS IN CHILDREN DRINKING CONTAMINATED FACTORY WATER

Local Reporter: Shravan

In cities like Delhi, where development is often discussed, the people of Nehru Camp slum in West Delhi don't even have access to clean water for drinking. Local reporter Shravan from Nehru Camp revealed that he wakes up at 5 a.m. every morning to fetch water on foot from the factory located in Keerti Nagar, which is not even fit for drinking. However, they are forced to drink it to quench their thirst. Not only Shravan, but other children in the community also say that they don't have access to clean drinking water. Now the situation is such that almost every household in Nehru Camp is falling prey to diseases like cholera, eye-related diseases, jaundice,



etc. Dangerous diseases are spreading, making it difficult for children to even attend school. Therefore, through balaknama newspaper, children appeal to the government to pay attention to the problems of street and working children.



INDIAN OIL TEAM CELEBRATED HOLI WITH STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN, DISTRIBUTING SCHOOL BAGS

Balaknama Reporter: Akash

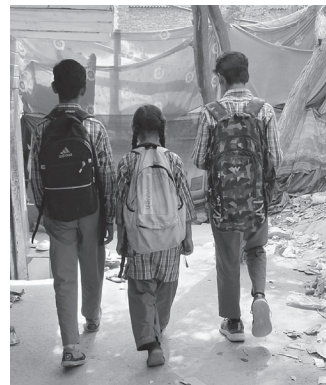
We all know that Holi is also called the "Festival of Colors" and is a joyous and festive occasion. On this day, people forget their differences and smear each other with the colours of love. Especially on this festival, children enthusiastically apply colors, gulal, and play with water guns. But this time, the joy of Holi doubled for street and working children. When local reporter visited the JDA slum in Jaipur, the children revealed that before this Holi, the Indian Oil team applied colors to them and celebrated the festival with them. Not only that, they interacted with all the children very easily, and

all the children introduced themselves, recited poems, stories, and songs, and even counting mountains, earning applause from everyone. Through this program, socially and economically weaker street and working children, Indian Oil officials celebrated a unique Holi, filling joy in their struggling lives. Most of the children who attended this program were school-goers who did not have bags or bottles for water. Therefore, all the children were given a bag, a water bottle, and a box of sweets as gifts, and the Indian Oil team conveyed the message of staying aware of education and inspired them to stay connected with education continuously.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN FACE DEBUT EXAMS, HAUNTED BY RESULT ANXIETIES

Local Reporter: Asif

Result or outcome! Just the mention of it often robs children of their sleep. The same is true for the street and working children of Kamla Nehru Camp in West Delhi, who have recently taken their annual exams. Some of these children have appeared for exams for the first time in their lives, including a girl named Julie (name changed), who is 13 years old. Julie started attending school in 2023 and is now taking her first annual exam in the eighth grade.



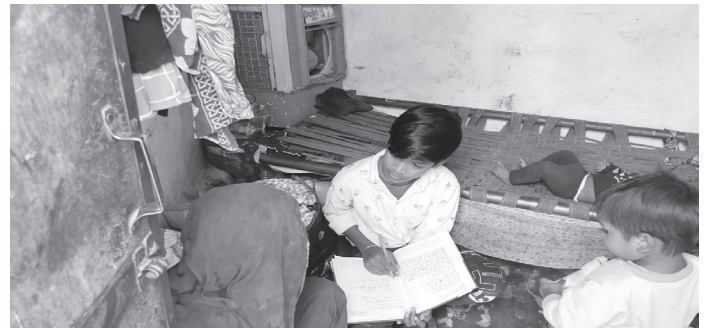
According to Julie, as much as she was excited to take the exam, she is even more anxious about the results. Julie wants to

become a teacher by studying further, and for that, she needs to study a lot so that she can teach street and working children like herself for free. But for this, it is also necessary for her to pass every class. This situation is not just Julie's but is common among all children who are losing sleep over the thought of exam results. As the time for results approaches, all children are haunted by the fear of results. We wish for a brighter future for all children and hope that they will pass their annual exams with good grades.

PARENTAL CONFLICTS RESULTED IN THE NEGLECT OF THE GIRL'S EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Akash
Local Reporter: Gulista

Balaknama Reporter Akash conducted visits to various slums in Jaipur to understand the problems and experiences of children. During a conversation with Gulista, the local reporter



from Kali Ka Bhatta, she revealed that her friend Isha (name changed) used to go to school with her, but due to parental conflicts, she dropped out of school. Currently, she stays at home to take care of her three siblings and spends the entire day doing household chores. To delve deeper into this matter, Balaknama Reporter Akash spoke with Isha. The girl explained that her parents used to have frequent conflicts, and her father used to mentally and physically harass her mother.

Many times, during the winter cold, her father would throw her mother out of the house. Due to all these conflicts, Isha's mother left home, taking the youngest brother with her, and went to the village. Currently, Isha is engaged in cooking, washing clothes, and household cleaning for her father and two sisters and one brother. Isha expressed her deep sadness about wanting to study in school. She enjoyed studying, but due to the parental conflicts, she had to drop out of school.

BALANCING EDUCATION AND WORK AT A PUNCTURE REPAIR SHOP-A DISRUPTED CHILDHOOD

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal
Local Reporter: Anil

Balaknama Reporter Kajal visited the Bagnana slum in Jaipur and gathered information from children. She learned from 13-year-old Anil (name changed) that he works in a motor garage repairing vehicles. Reporter Kajal interviewed Anil to delve deeper into the information provided by the children.

Anil disclosed that he works in the garage from 2 to 6 PM daily, earning Rs. 1500 per month. Currently, he mostly performs minor tasks like fixing punctures, while he is learning to handle more significant repairs. When asked by the reporter if he attends school and why he works, Anil expressed his fondness for studying but explained that due to the family's financial condition, he has to work. His

father's income is insufficient to cover household expenses and other necessities, so Anil decided to take up work. He attends school from 7 AM to 1 PM and then goes to work. The Balaknama Reporter was amazed to learn about Anil's dedication to continuing his education alongside his work. However, she couldn't help but feel concerned about the impact of responsibilities on his childhood.

STRAY ANIMALS WANDERING AROUND POSE A NUISANCE FOR RESIDENTS AND CHILDREN

Local Reporters-Sumit, Shivam,
Insa Balaknama Reporter Sarita

When reporter Sarita visited various slums in Gurugram, she encountered some children aged between 10 to 12 years. Upon conversing with them, they shared their problem with Sarita, stating that it's very difficult for them to come to study due to many cows standing in the way. This obstruction prevents them from regularly attending the learning centre. These cows often surround us, making it very difficult for us to come and go. Sometimes, due to

fear, we can't even proceed further. These cows also charge at us with their horns. They don't have owners, and those who do own them extract their milk and leave them roaming the streets. Consequently, they end up consuming garbage all day, and their milk is extracted in the evening, after which they are left on the streets again, which adversely affects these animals as well.

They become more aggressive, attacking anyone who comes in their way. Many times, these cows also cause a lot of damage to our shanties. This is



a significant problem because sometimes they even attack our shanties, and we have to try to fend them off, exposing us to great danger. Often, these cows stay near our shanties

because the owners who extract their milk are residents of Badshahpur, and after extracting the milk, they leave them near our shanties again, causing us a lot of trouble.

When we tell these people, they say, "Where will we keep them?"

This puts us in great danger, and we face many difficulties in going to our center regularly. Sometimes, upon seeing a cow, we return home, and sometimes, due to fear, we can't regularly reach our center, which prompts the organization's workers to inquire why we don't come to study regularly. Then, all of us children got together and shared these problems so that we could get rid of these problems and attend our NGO center regularly.

YOUNGSTERS BULLY CHILDREN INTO BUYING CIGARETTES BY THREATENING VIOLENCE WHEN DENIED

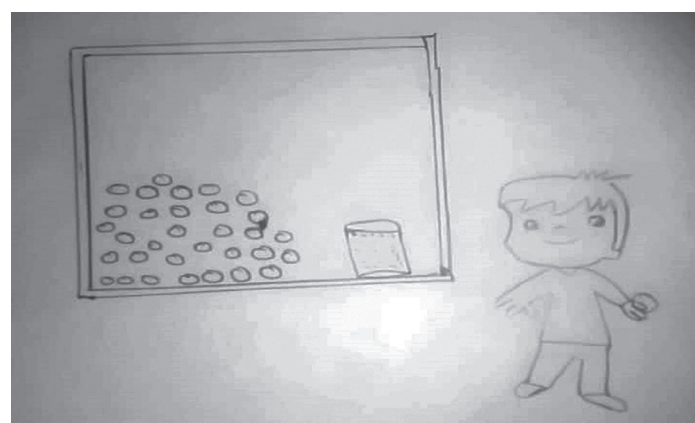
Balaknama reporter-Hans
Kumar Local Reporter-Sufiyan

Recently, there have been alarming incidents in Delhi where youth are engaging in criminal activities and substance abuse, signaling a concerning trend in our society. The frequency of criminal incidents involving adolescent boys raises serious concerns. One such incident came to light when Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited the Zakhira area in West Delhi. He was informed by local reporter Sufiyan that a few days ago, as usual, he was playing near a public toilet with his



friends when some antisocial elements under the influence of drugs approached them and forcibly took them to the nearby trucks where they were already consuming drugs. These boys were around 19 to 20 years old. They demanded Rs. 50 from us and aggressively insisted that we buy cigarettes and

tandoori bread from the hotel for them. When I refused and started to leave, two of the drug-addicted youths blocked our path, grabbed my collar, and threatened to beat us if we didn't comply with their demands. They were continuously using abusive language. Then, one of my friends confronted them with courage and declared that none of us would do what they asked. Then, all of us pushed those drug-addicted boys aside and ran home, informing our parents about the incident. Subsequently, our parents and some neighbors rushed to the spot, but by then, no one was there.



CHILDREN COMPELLED TO EARN A LIVING BY VENDING SNACKS

Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor
Local Reporter- Afreen

Today, I am going to share with you the story of children who reside in slum areas, where they even set up snack carts to sustain their lives. When our Balaknama

reporters visited the Nirvana slums in Gurugram, they discovered that some children, amidst immense struggles, were selling snacks from carts. Upon learning about this, our reporters ventured into the slums to meet these children and engage with the community. It was revealed that there was a child who operated a snack cart. Despite facing significant challenges in locating him, we eventually found him. However, upon seeing us, he became extremely nervous and retreated into his home. After much persuasion, he reluctantly agreed to speak with us. When our reporter asked him some questions, he became visibly anxious. Sensing his discomfort, our Balaknama reporter approached him with empathy, which encouraged the child to open up. The reporter asked him why he engaged in such work at such a young age. The child responded that he had to do this work to fulfill his needs, and whatever money he saved, he contributed to his household expenses to support his family.

CHILDREN RENDERED HOMELESS BY SLUM REPLACEMENT SUFFER DISRUPTIONS TO THEIR EDUCATION AND SAFETY

Local Reporter- Ritik
Balaknama reporter- Sarita

When Balaknama reporter Sarita visited the slums of Badshahpur in Haryana's Gurugram, she encountered children living on the streets due to the demolition of their homes for construction purposes. During her conversation with the children, Ritik (name changed) shared his story. He said he was 15 years old and originally from Bihar, where his parents worked as laborers. Ritik explained that they had come to Gurugram in search of work, and while his mother found employment as a domestic worker, his father worked as a laborer. He described how their slum



had been demolished to make way for construction, leaving them homeless. Despite being given a 15-day notice by the slum contractor to vacate, they couldn't find alternative accommodation and were

forced to live on the streets, jeopardizing their education as their school was now out of reach. While organizations like Chetna NGO had helped with their admission and

education, their current circumstances made it impossible to continue studying. Ritik expressed their struggle to afford rent in new places due to high costs, leaving them vulnerable to hunger and further economic hardships. He lamented the trend of demolishing slums to build commercial structures like PGs and factories, making it increasingly difficult for impoverished families and children to find shelter.

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

**CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE
NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY
PROBLEM.**

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS HAVE DEPRIVED SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN OF EDUCATION

Reporter: Saifali

What would happen if children attending school were suddenly deprived of education? This is precisely what happened to two children in West Delhi, who were rendered educationally deprived due to familial conflicts. During a visit by a Balaknama reporter in West Delhi's C-4 Jhuggi, it was discovered that two children (aged 12 and 10 respectively) and their parents were subjected to physical assault and threats by relatives from their own family. These relatives, who were considered their brother-in-laws, physically assaulted the children's parents and threatened their lives, compelling the family to leave



the area. Consequently, both children, who were attending school, were abruptly taken away by their parents on the morning of Eid.

Despite facing severe financial difficulties, the family managed to survive. They had migrated to Delhi in search

of employment, hailing from Begusarai district in Bihar just three months prior. However, they encountered numerous challenges upon arriving in Delhi. The children's mother earned a living by dyeing footwear, while their father struggled to find stable employment. Despite the hardships, their mother was determined to educate her children and had enrolled them in school. Both children were performing well academically. However, this incident not only affected the family but also had a detrimental impact on the children's education. Due to the interpersonal conflict, they were forced to leave Delhi and return to their village, disrupting their mental well-being and academic progress.

ADMINISTRATIVE NEGLIGENCE EXACERBATES CHILDREN'S DISTRESS BY DEPRIVING THEM OF ESSENTIAL AMENITIES



Reporter: Hans Kumar

Children found eating expired chocolates from garbage bins. During a visit to the slums of Shivaji Park in West Delhi, Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar observed children scavenging through garbage bins. Suspecting their activities, he approached them to inquire about what they were retrieving from the bins. To his dismay, he

found some children extracting expired chocolates and toffees. Apparently, surrounding shopkeepers disposed of their expired products in the area, which were then picked up by children from nearby slums to consume at home. Some children were seen consuming the chocolates on the spot. Upon questioning why they were consuming expired chocolates retrieved from

garbage bins, one child replied that they couldn't afford to buy expensive chocolates from the shops, and their parents' financial situation wasn't conducive to purchasing such luxuries. Hence, they resorted to consuming expired chocolates. The children were then educated about the potential health hazards of consuming expired products. They were made aware that consuming items past their expiry date could lead to various health issues, including stomach pain, nausea, and diarrhea. Moreover, many products don't display their expiry date on the packaging. After understanding the risks associated with expired food consumption, the children collectively disposed of all the chocolates they had collected, pledging not to consume any expired products found in garbage bins or elsewhere in the future.

DURING MEAL PREPARATION, A TRAGIC INCIDENT INVOLVING A CHILD OCCURRED

Local Reporters Shahzad and Balaknama Reporter Kishan

Street and working children engage in various household chores along with their other tasks. Among these household chores, children often encounter various difficulties. When reporters from Balaknama reached the vicinity of the slums in Noida, they saw a child in the settlement whose face was burned on one side. Upon speaking with him, they learned the cause of the burns. The child explained that he lives in the settlement with his parents. There are six members in his family - parents, two brothers,



and two sisters. One brother and one sister are older and go with parents for daily wage work at 8:00 in the morning. The younger sister takes care of the household chores such as washing clothes, washing

dishes, sweeping, mopping, cooking, etc. Sometimes, before his mother leaves for work, she cooks food herself, otherwise, his sister cooks. One day, neither his mother nor his sister had cooked, and he was extremely hungry. Moreover, his father hadn't given any money for us to buy food from outside. So, we decided to cook ourselves. They placed a griddle on the stove to make rotis and kneaded the dough. They placed firewood inside the stove and after some time, they had made some rotis. However, the firewood was running low, and the fire was dying out, so they placed a large piece of firewood inside and a sack over it to burn

THE HAZY DREAMS AND STUMBLING CHILDHOOD OF A GIRL MAKING BAMBOO WOVEN BASKET

Balaknama Reporter: Akash
Local Reporter Sana



If we think about the lives of street and working children, we uncover a canvas painted with distress, worries, exploitation, and numerous dreams. When our Balaknama reporter visited the slum Khor in Jaipur, she encountered a truth that reflects this reality. She had the opportunity to speak with 13-year-old Sana (name changed), who candidly shared her story. Sana revealed that she has been living with her family in this slum for the past 4 years. Previously, they lived in another slum, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were forced to leave, and the government shifted them to Khor. As a result, her school was also left behind, where she was studying in class 2, and her life changed with the relocation. There are 7 people in her family, including parents, 5 siblings, and her father is physically disabled. Among the five siblings, two are younger girls. After returning from Chetna NGO's alternative education center, Sana works at home making bamboo woven basket, and she manages to make around 20-22 roofs per day. She earns ₹20 for each bamboo woven basket and in this way, Sana earns around ₹300-₹400.

Working continuously sitting in one place for most of the day, she gets tired and complains of back pain. In this work, the girl's mother and both younger siblings collectively contribute. She cannot go to the center every day because she has to work. Despite being engaged in work and labor, the girl dreams that she will be able to go to school during this year's admission, but Sana faces a mountain of problems, including the family's financial situation, becoming ineligible for school admission due to age, leaving work to accommodate school, and more. Sana mentioned that she is satisfied with her work because she doesn't have any other option at the moment. She helps at home. Sana also mentioned that when she sees children of her age going to school, she feels tempted, but she consoles herself by realizing that her work is also necessary.

CHILDREN FALLING VICTIM TO THE HABIT OF PLAYING ONLINE GAMES

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal



We all know that nowadays, most children spend their entire time playing online games, which leads them to spend most of their time indoors and not go out to play. In this sequence, when reporter Kajal visited Lakhesara slum, she saw some children playing games on their mobile phones on the way. To gather information about which games the children were playing and what else they were doing on their mobile phones, she spoke to the children. Child

Sharif (changed name) told her that a group of children in the settlement plays the Free Fire game on their mobile phones. These children remain so engrossed in the game that they get late for school and sometimes even take holidays. When their parents scold them for not sending them to school, they get very angry, and sometimes, they leave home for school but instead of going to school, they gather at one place and keep playing. In this settlement, 4 to 5 children have mobile phones, and they take money from them to play games on their mobile phones, and the children are so fond of online games that they play them by giving them money. The Balaknama reporter explained to the children who continuously play games and told them that due to the continuous habit of playing games, children can have many health problems, irritability, loneliness, and even the risk of brain damage.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES WHILE TAKING THEIR FIRST ANNUAL EXAMS

Balaknama Reporter: Akash
Local Reporter: Ranveer

The word "exam" evokes a mix of excitement and anxiety. When children sit for exams, they experience not only fear, worry, or stress but also a sense of enthusiasm. The situation is quite different for street and working children, most of whom are appearing for exams for the first time. Our Balaknama Reporter visited a slum where many such children were taking exams. To understand their experiences, she interviewed some of them. Ranveer (12 years old) shared that he has enrolled in class 6

for the first time this year and is appearing for exams for the first time. Ranveer confessed feeling a bit scared because he has never sat for exams before, and he doesn't feel as confident as the other children. However, he also finds it exciting because the exam atmosphere is different. He enjoys discussing studies with his friends and even studies at their homes sometimes. He is preparing diligently and believes he will do well in the exams. Sadhna (13 years old) is in class 7 and is appearing for her first annual exams this year. She finds exams quite enjoyable. She doesn't have to carry a bag to



school, and she wakes up early. Her mother helps her a lot and doesn't make her do much household work, encouraging her to focus on studying. Going

to school for exams, especially for the first time, fills her with excitement. She found her Hindi paper quite good. Anjali (12 years old) is in class 6 and

also appearing for exams for the first time. She finds the experience a bit strange and feels a bit pressured sitting with so many other children in the exam hall. However, she appreciates the support from her school and friends. While she feels anxious about some subjects she finds difficult, she is determined to study hard and believes that taking exams is a fantastic experience. Thus, all these street and working children, appearing for exams for the first time, shared their varied experiences. For them, taking exams is a unique experience that they feel will help them progress and fulfill their dreams.

REPORTERS ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO ENGAGE IN OPEN BASIC EDUCATION



Local reporters Khushboo and Balaknama reporter Kishan.

Taking into consideration the responsibilities of street and working children at home, they face many difficulties in achieving their goals in life. Knowing the story of 15-year-old Janaki (changed name) living in Bihar, Janaki said that we are residents of Bihar and currently live in a rented slum near Noida Char Murti. Our work involves sorting and collecting scrap. There are four members in our family, parents, one sister, and one brother. We all work in scrap, 6 months ago my

life was going very well and I used to go to school daily and pay good attention to education, along with paying attention to household chores as well. But now life is going on in fits and starts, as a result, education has also been left behind. Father had to go to the village to build a house and he made preparations to go to the village as soon as possible and immediately took us to the village, without giving us enough time to inform the teachers or friends that we are going to the village. We had already left our copies, books, and bags in the Noida slum, thinking that it is a

matter of 15 to 20 days of work and we will return soon and then inform everyone in school, but it did not happen. It took more than 6 months to build the house, then the construction of the house was done, then our whole family came to the Noida slum, and then we paid attention to our scrap work and then a few days later we also went to school but when we went there we found out that our name had been removed from the school. After hearing this, we returned home and told this to our parents, parents did not say anything after hearing this and did not discuss re-enrolling in school. Currently, I work to take care of my sister-in-law's small children and take time to learn mehndi. But what happened, I left school from 6th grade but I have not accepted defeat, if I get a chance, I will continue education. After hearing this, the journalists advised the girl to get education from open basic education, which made the girl quite happy.

A CHILD FALLS VICTIM TO THE NEGLIGENCE OF DRUG ADDICTS BATTLING ADDICTION



Reporter - Akash

Today, we are going to tell you the story of a child who was severely injured due to the complete negligence of a drug addict. Life in Delhi's Shaheed camp area is already very challenging for the children present there, who strive to face every difficulty that comes their way. This story is about a 10-year-old boy living in the Shaheed Camp who was going to play on the street as usual, as his parents were out for work, and he used to play in the alley every day. That day, he was walking to play in the park when he encountered a man who was heavily

intoxicated and demolishing his house. He was completely out of his senses, causing the broken bricks to fall on the child's head, severely injuring him and causing blood to flow. Due to being completely intoxicated, the man didn't realize what had happened. The child was screaming in pain when the locals came and helped him, immediately informing his father upon seeing his condition. After his father arrived, they took him to the hospital where he received treatment. Following this incident, the child's father lodged a complaint with the police, and after registering the complaint, the police arrived and took the intoxicated person, who was already involved in previous cases, into custody. He managed to bribe the police and get released. When the child's father found out about this, he was deeply saddened, but despite not wanting to, he silently accepted it. This incident once again instilled a sense of fear in many children there because such incidents often occur where alcoholics and drug addicts roam, either causing harm to others due to their lack of consciousness or harming themselves. Addiction has taken such a toll on them that they no longer care about themselves or anyone else. In the area, there are many people who are so lost in their addiction that they start unnecessary fights or resort to violence with passersby, and sometimes they even resort to theft and disappear from there.

DURING SWELTERING SUMMERS, AN INNOCENT CHILD SELLS ICE

Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor,
Local Reporter: Sohanur

Today, we're going to share the story of a 12-year-old boy who sells ice. During a meeting with reporters of Balaknama in Gurufam settlements, nearby children informed us about a boy named Noor (name changed) who resides in Nirvana Country slum and sells ice. According to them, there are children who sell ice in the settlements, and this boy, aged around 12, goes around selling ice in the scorching heat of the settlements. When our Balaknama reporters went to meet the boy in the settlements, it was quite



challenging to locate his house. Eventually, after much effort, they found his house, and upon knocking, his parents came out. Reporters questioned them, "How can you send your son, at such a young age, to sell ice? Don't

you know it's a big concern to make children work? How can you send him to work at such a tender age?" Unfortunately, they couldn't meet the child as he was out for some reason. Advising the parents, our reporters suggested that they

should call the child back home as they wanted to talk to him. However, due to unfortunate circumstances, they couldn't meet the child. Our reporters advised them to provide a good education to their children instead of sending them to work, so they could shine bright in the future. They emphasized that children shouldn't be made to work as it hinders their physical and mental development. The parents expressed that due to financial constraints, they are compelled to make their children work, but they also expressed their desire for their children to receive a good education and not be involved in labor.

CHILDREN EAT JUNK FOOD FOUND IN GARBAGE DUMPS

Local Reporter-Majibur and Reporter Kishan

In various places, we often order food such as pizza, burgers, momos, or Pepsi. Have you ever wondered what happens if junk food or leftover meals are thrown away and what happened with that food? To delve into this matter further, reporters conducted a visit to a settlement where scavenging and segregating waste is a prevalent activity. During their visit, they observed many children engaged in scavenging and segregating recyclable materials. When they attempted to inquire about this matter, Deepak



(name changed), a 14-year-old, explained in detail. "We are residents of West Bengal and currently reside

in makeshift settlements near Noida's Surajpur area. We engage in scavenging and segregating waste from

various places to make a living. Our family comprises five members - parents, two brothers, and one sister. My elder brother collects recyclables from different places like buildings, factories, hotels, etc. My elder sister works at other people's houses, earning ₹400 per day for segregating recyclables. While my parents stay at home, they segregate the recyclables brought by my elder brother. Recyclables include various materials such as plastic, metal, cardboard, thermocol, and sometimes, food. In this settlement, there is a significant amount of waste scavenging activity, and we often find leftover

food items like Pepsi, pizza, burgers, momos, etc., along with recyclables. Many times, the food found among recyclables is still edible, while most of the time, it is spoiled. Sometimes, the food emits a foul odor, but unaware of the consequences, children still consume it, leading to illnesses. When parents notice their children consuming junk food, they also check if the food is good or spoiled. They instruct their children to eat the edible junk food and dispose of the spoiled ones in the garbage. Due to the abundance of junk food and other food items in the garbage dumps, large drums get filled up quickly."

SLUM CHILDREN ENDURE WATER SCARCITY AND VERBAL ABUSE

Bureau Report

Children in the slums of Noida endure a harrowing experience of scarcity of water, accompanied by verbal abuse and harassment. In a bid to resolve various issues, people often resort to seeking assistance from others, a reality vividly depicted by a young girl residing in one of the shanty settlements. Recounting the challenges faced by children in the basti, she elaborated,

"We reside near the streets, amidst approximately 35 to 40 shanties. This area, though government-owned, has been encroached upon by villagers from nearby areas, who also demand payments from all residents of the basti." The size of the shanty determines the monthly rent, ranging from Rs. 1000 to 1200 for a single unit, while the cost doubles for larger accommodations. However, basic amenities such as water and electricity are

non-existent. The girl further explained, "The owner's brother of this basti keeps his buffaloes and cows nearby, with a brick house constructed for his use. He is known to be quite unruly, and all residents, including children and adults alike, are compelled to obtain water from him." Water is not provided free of cost; rather, residents are charged Rs. 20 for filling a tank with 15 to 20 litres of water, and Rs. 300 for 15 gallons.

Despite paying for water, its availability is unpredictable due to the owner's erratic behaviour, particularly when he consumes alcohol. On such occasions, he verbally abuses everyone, hindering access to water. In desperate times, his wife sometimes provides water, but only after pleading with her. Moreover, if the owner is intoxicated and awake, even his wife refuses to provide water, fearing his wrath. The situation is

exacerbated when the owner damages the motor in a fit of rage, leaving residents without water for days. In such instances, they resort to other sources, including nearby nurseries, where they face similar challenges and often return empty-handed after being chased away. Obtaining water becomes an arduous task, involving prolonged waits and supplications, draining a significant portion of their meager earnings.

DESPITE STANDING AROUND TEMPLES AND MALLS DURING MEAL TIMES, CHILDREN BEG FOR FOOD

Talkative Reporter: Shahina & Reporter: Kishan

You might have observed children begging around the temples you visit daily for prayers. Do you know why they stand there? Reporters visited some neighbourhoods in Noida and discovered that approximately 20 children from these areas go to nearby temples to beg for food. When they inquired from a girl living in the neighbourhood about the reason behind children begging, she explained that the items obtained through begging to sustain these children for a day. Children from the neighbourhood head to the temples in the morning to beg, standing outside the temple premises. Surrounding the temple, there are buildings on all sides, and people residing in these buildings visit the temple for daily prayers. These children stand there and beg from these people. After offering prayers, the residents of the buildings give them blessings and sometimes some money. Furthermore, if these children don't receive anything from the temple, they go to the shopping mall nearby and start begging there. However, some people do help them by providing clothes, fruits, vegetables, or money. They stay there until they manage to arrange a day's meal and hence, parents send them to beg while they engage in their daily activities. Currently, none of the children who beg attend school, which is why they set out to beg every morning.

COMPULSIVE GAMBLING JEOPARDIZES THE PROSPECTS OF OUR YOUTH

Bureau Report

In the absence of parents at home, children indulge in gambling activities behind their backs. We're talking about the area in Sector 101 in Noida, where reporters from Balaknama decided to hold a meeting with the children. Before starting the meeting, the reporters glanced towards the slums and noticed that most adults were sitting in circles, gambling, and playing other games. During the meeting, journalists discussed this issue with the children. The children explained that there are around 150 slums in this area, and most parents leave for work early in the morning. Many children in this settlement also engage in various types of work, such as scavenging, working in bicycle shops, factories, buildings, etc. There are dense forests adjacent to the settlement, where some adults spend their entire day playing gambling games. Observing them, children also venture into the nearby jungle area to gamble with other adults. When



children don't play with adults, they start playing among themselves, ranging from 10 to 17 years old. Their parents are unaware of this because they leave for work early in the morning and return late in the evening. Some mothers go to work in households, returning home around 12 or 1:00. Sensing their mothers'

return, children immediately stop playing. Parents give money to children for food, but instead, children use it for gambling. Some even borrow money from adults or friends for gambling. When parents find out, they beat them, but it doesn't deter them. They come up with excuses and continue gambling.

You can also support in the publication of the Balaknama newspaper, For more info please contact : info@chetnango.org

This newsletter is for limited delivery only. All the pictures are printed by the approval of the children.

Balaknama thanks Sardar Nagina Singh Ji & Family and Abhinav Outsourcing Pvt Ltd for helping us in publishing our newsletter. You can also help us with publishing. Balaknama is written originally in Hindi by children reporters. This is translated version of Hindi and translation assistance is taken from adults ensuring the original feel intact.