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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.

TO AVOID THE INCREASING HEATWAVE, STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN SHARED IMPORTANT MEASURES

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

In the scorching heat affecting every corner of India, people are grappling with various problems. This includes both adults and children, especially those living near roadsides or signals, who lack basic amenities like shade or a proper place to stay. Families with their own homes manage somehow, but street and working children face more delicate situations. How are these children coping with the rising heat? To find out, journalists from Balaknama visited various communities and places to talk to them and understand what new methods they are trying to protect themselves from the heat. Talking to working children living in the slums near Char Murti in Noida, 13-year-old Golu (name changed) said, "In this area, we live with our parents who collect and sort garbage. Our parents go out in the morning to collect garbage from nearby buildings and roads." Golu explained that the current heat is so intense that sweating doesn't stop even when they are sorting garbage, making the work difficult to focus on. "Despite this, we try new ways to beat the heat. For instance, we find various damaged batteries, motors, fans, and wires from the garbage, and use them to make a large and small fan that helps us get some air." Ajay, a 16-year-old resident of Jaipur (name changed), mentioned that in this

increasing heat, everyone needs electricity. In our neighbourhood, there are times when electricity goes off for 2 to 3 consecutive days, or it goes off unexpectedly during the day, causing us significant inconvenience. During nighttime power cuts, older children can tolerate the heat to some extent, but younger children and newborns cannot bear it. Throughout the day, the impact of the heat is significant, and even in the evening, despite temperatures cooling down, the heat remains intense. While we have some trees around, they provide little relief as they often do not bring in much breeze. We struggle to breathe slowly and find solace there, which is why we often end up sleeping in those spots at night. During daytime power cuts, these trees are our only support. Sumit, residing in Sector 52, Gurugram, with his parents (name changed), described living in rented rooms. There are four members in our homes—my brother, parents, and our mother works as a housekeeper in others' homes. My father works in housekeeping at a hotel, and my sister stays at home. We attend school and study at home after school. From 3:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon, we attend tuition. We go to school and tuition every day. My father earns barely Rs. 8000 per month, and my mother earns Rs. 6000 per month. Despite this income, it is difficult to make ends meet. Consequently, my parents



can only afford to educate me, while my younger sister cannot continue her education because our earnings go towards rent and groceries, leaving little savings for my father, hence he prioritizes my education. Currently, when we leave home, the intense sunlight causes the body to burn, as if the entire body will catch fire, leading to profuse sweating. When we go for tuition, we have to travel quite far, exposing us to a lot of sunlight. Therefore, whenever I go for tuition, I make it a point to seek shade and take some precautions. The increasing heat has wreaked havoc to the extent that children in the neighborhoods near Delhi's Shivaji Park are experimenting with new ways to escape the heat. During a conversation with Raju (changed name), he mentioned that everyone is struggling with the heat. We live in tin sheds in our neighborhood. The temperature in the morning remains moderate, but after

10:00, it increases, making it difficult for us children to stay in our neighborhood. The impact of the sun is felt on the tin shed, and despite leaving home, we cannot go anywhere. You may think you can go near the trees around you, but there is no facility like shady trees near us, and for this reason, by putting old mattresses on the tin's roof and putting water on top of them and wetting sarees or scarves, we do other household tasks comfortably, minimizing the effect of the heat. In Jaipur, Gautam (changed name) said that due to the heat, we do not feel like working. It is our duty to go to garbage dumps with our parents, but now the temperature rises so much in the afternoon that we do not feel like going out of the house. Therefore, now to avoid this problem, we go to pick up garbage from 5:00 am to 9:00 am. The journalists were touring near Delhi's Lal Kila when they spoke to a boy selling toys. The boy

mentioned that they buy toys from Sadar Bazar next to the market and sell them at the traffic signal nearby. Due to the intense heat, they sweat a lot and have to wipe it off frequently, which causes a bad smell from their clothes. Many of them also develop boils on their bodies due to excessive sweating. Even though the boy had boils on his body, he continued working in the harsh sun. He explained that when it gets too hot, they seek shelter under nearby shop awnings. The journalists also tried to understand why the current temperature is rising. Kartik, living in Delhi's Chuna Bhatti Basti, said that this year's heatwave is more severe, with temperatures reaching between 45 to 50 degrees Celsius. This rise is attributed to several factors such as rampant deforestation and construction of large buildings, factories, and malls in forest areas, causing temperatures to soar. He believes that planting more trees could mitigate the heat. Madhuri from Habibpur in Noida's settlements noted that the burning of trash contributes significantly to air pollution, exacerbating the heat. She suggested that refraining from burning trash could help reduce rising temperatures. A 15-year-old girl from Jaipur added that stagnant dirty water in every corner contributes to the rising temperatures. She emphasized the importance of keeping surroundings clean to mitigate the heatwave.

FROM TRASH TO TRIUMPH: NAVEEN'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

Local Reporter-Nolesh

The story of 14-year-old Naveen (name changed), a resident of the Shivaji Park slum in West Delhi, is a testament to the power of change and inspiration. Once, Naveen spent his days scavenging through garbage, but today he is enrolled in school, thanks to the relentless efforts of the NGO Chetna and the Child Welfare Committee. Naveen's journey began two years ago when workers from Chetna NGO found him scavenging, without any formal identification, education, or access to basic services like an Aadhaar card or a bank account. His future seemed bleak. However, the dedicated team did not



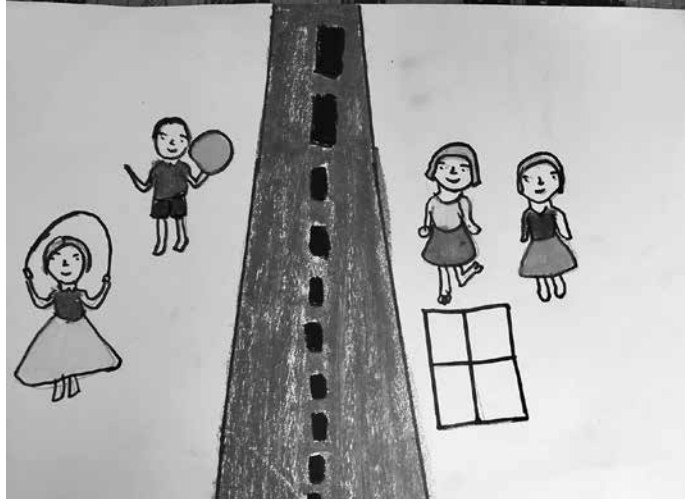
give up on him. Through persistent efforts, Naveen eventually received his Aadhaar card and opened a bank account, paving the way for his school admission. Beaming with pride, Naveen shared his story: "I never thought I would wear a uniform and hold books instead of a garbage bag. I am grateful to Chetna NGO and the Child Welfare Committee for believing in me." Naveen's transformation is a testament to the power of determination and the impact of community efforts. As he embarks on this new chapter of his life, Naveen's story inspires hope and resilience, reminding us that every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential.

NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION BRINGS JOY TO SETTLEMENT CHILDREN

Local Reporter: Sartaj and
Balaknama Reporter: Hans
Kumar

Children living in the Amar Park slum area of Delhi are delighted by the significant improvements brought about by the new road construction in their locality. Once plagued by potholes and litter, the streets have now transformed into a well-maintained path, making life easier for residents, especially children. Talkative reporter Sartaj shared his happiness with Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar during a visit to the area, expressing that the new road has made a substantial difference in their daily lives. Sartaj said, "Previously, the roads here were in terrible condition, and we had to

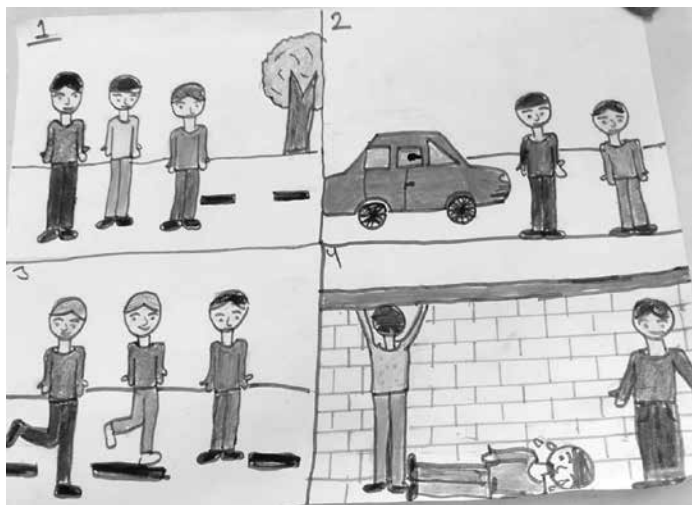
navigate through potholes and filth every time we went out. But now, thanks to the new road construction, everything has changed." One of the significant improvements brought by the new road is the covering of the open drain that used to run through the area. The stench from the drain made the surroundings unbearable, but now, with the drain covered, there is no more foul odor. Children now have ample space to play without worrying about the open drain posing a threat to their health and safety. Efforts to keep the area clean have also been commendable. Earlier, the streets were littered with garbage, causing inconvenience to the residents. Sartaj mentioned that people often threw waste



on the streets, exacerbating the filth. However, with the introduction of regular garbage collection services, the streets are now clean and free of litter. A garbage truck comes daily to clean the area,

ensuring a clean and hygienic environment for everyone. Children in Amar Park are particularly happy with the new road construction as they now have more space to play and have fun. The previously

limited play area has been expanded, allowing children to run around freely without any hindrance. The absence of potholes and debris on the road has made it safer for children to play outside, bringing them immense joy. Overall, the new road construction in Amar Park has brought a sense of happiness and satisfaction among the residents, especially the children. The improved infrastructure, clean environment, and enhanced play areas have made their locality a better place to live. Residents are grateful for the positive changes brought by the new road and look forward to more developments that will further enhance their quality of life.



Reporter:
Sufiyan Shamshad Khan

Children in the Zakhira community of West Delhi are still not safe in public places. One day, three children from the slums of Zakhira were heading towards the Inderlok area to fetch some items for their parents. Aslam (name

changed), 13, along with his friends Istaq (name changed), 10, and Sonu (name changed), 11, were on their way to Inderlok when a car suddenly approached them from behind as they walked under a bridge. The children did not initially realize that the person in the car was following them with

SENSING KIDNAPPING THREAT, CHILDREN SAVE THEMSELVES

the intent of abducting them. While the children were laughing and joking amongst themselves, they didn't sense any danger. After a while, the person in the car called out to them, asking where they were going and offering to give them a ride. The children, not understanding his intentions, laughed it off and politely declined, saying, "No, Uncle, we can go by ourselves. Thank you." They suggested he continue with his work, as they knew the way. However, the man persisted, continuing to follow them slowly in his car. Istaq, the 10-year-old, noticed this unusual behavior and told his friends that the man had

been following them for a long time and seemed to be driving very slowly. Though his friends initially laughed it off, the man approached them again, this time more insistently, offering a ride and even showing signs of aggression by threatening them with a slap. The children began to feel scared, especially when the man continued to drive closely behind them. Realizing the potential danger, they picked up their pace. The man also sped up, which heightened their fear that he might have accomplices in the car ready to kidnap them. Sufiyan, another child, suspected that the man was a criminal

looking to abduct children for trafficking. The three children then started running as fast as they could. Reaching a bridge, they climbed over a wall and jumped to the other side, managing to enter their area. However, Istaq struggled to jump quickly and fell, injuring his hand. Sufiyan helped his friends, and they continued running until they encountered a woman. They explained the situation to her, and she offered to help them. She took them to a safer place, but by then, the car and the man had disappeared. In the end, the children showed great courage and managed to save themselves, safely returning to their homes.

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,
Talkative Reporter: Sonia

We all know that with the right mix of hard work and dedication, nothing can stop dreams from coming true. However, the path to success in life is very challenging, and even a small amount of negativity can make us lose our way and break our spirit. On the other hand, if we think positively, we can make progress in life. A similar glimpse was seen in the street and working children of Jamdoli Kachhi Basti in Jaipur. Sonia, a talkative reporter from Jamdoli Kachhi Basti, shared that when they got admission to the school, they were very happy. However, their school was about 3 kilometers away from the settlement, and walking

STREET CHILDREN OVERCOME EVERY OBSTACLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL



such a distance was often difficult for the children. At that time, their parents supported them by arranging rickshaws/taxis for their commute. Unfortunately, this arrangement lasted only a few months due to financial constraints, and the rickshaw service was discontinued. Despite this, the children enjoyed going to school and studying, each having different dreams. In response, the children came up with a plan. All the children from the settlement gathered and started walking to school

together every day, and they would return together as well. This made the journey enjoyable, as they would chat and laugh, making the distance seem shorter. The children faced their problems with great effort and dedication. This year, around 30 children from their settlement passed their respective classes with good marks and have now moved on to the next grade. Sonia expressed her happiness, saying that despite so many challenges, they did not lose courage and worked together to achieve their dreams.

GIRL EAGERLY AWAITS BOARD EXAM RESULTS AFTER HARD WORK

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,
Talkative Reporter: Sneha

During Balaknama reporter Kajal's visit to Mangyawas settlement in Jaipur, it was discovered that Sneha had recently taken her 8th board exams. Kajal spoke with Sneha to learn about her experiences, and Sneha, beaming with happiness, shared, "I faced a lot of issues with my legal documents during school admission, but with the help of the Chetna organization workers, I finally got admitted to the school. However, my next challenge

was adjusting to the city school's environment, which was very different from my village school. Sometimes, the students at the new school bothered me a lot, but gradually, I started attending school regularly. The Chetna organization workers kept a close eye on us, ensuring we didn't face any problems and regularly communicating with the school staff about our needs. This support helped me a lot. "On one hand, I helped my father with his work due to our family's financial issues, and on the other hand, I prepared for my 8th board



exams. I created a timetable and helped my father by ironing clothes at his shop for three hours every morning before school. From 12:30 PM to 5:00 PM, I focused on my studies at school. I managed my time well and scored good marks in the regular tests at school. This boosted my confidence, and I was sure I would do well in the exams. I answered all the questions well and am hopeful that I will pass with good marks. I am grateful to the Chetna organization for helping me prepare for my exams and motivating me."

MOTHER'S SUPPORT TRANSFORMS CHILDREN'S LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter:
Sarita, Talkative Reporter: Rohan

During a visit to the slum area near Emaar Tower, Sector 66 in Gurugram, Balaknama reporter Sarita met Rohan (a pseudonym). Rohan shared that his older brother Mayank (a pseudonym) had fallen into bad company and started using drugs. Father had been imprisoned many years ago, leaving mother to care for the family alone. She works tirelessly, doing household chores and cleaning to ensure her children have a comfortable life. Despite the constant worry of making ends meet, she never shares her problems with the children, facing them bravely on her own. Rohan explained



that after their father's imprisonment, his mother moved them to Gurugram. Initially, she struggled to find work and stayed with her aunt for a while. Eventually, with her aunt's help, she secured a job-cleaning houses. Despite the hardships and societal taunts, she managed to raise her children single-handedly.

Rohan's mother, whom he describes as a superwoman, doesn't scold or punish them much. Even after a long day at work, she cooks for them and looks after their needs. However, Rohan's brother Mayank began using tobacco and other substances. Their mother was deeply upset upon discovering this and

tried to reason with him, reminding him of their father's imprisonment and her own struggles to provide for them. She emphasized the importance of education for a better future, despite their financial constraints. One day, a worker from the Chetna organization met Rohan's mother and learned about their situation. She encouraged Rohan to attend their alternative education center. Initially hesitant, Rohan eventually visited the center, where he engaged in various games and activities, which made him eager to return. The center's staff regularly brought him in and educated all the children about the dangers of drug use, stressing that their primary responsibility was to

study and make their parents proud. Gradually, Mayank also started attending the center and distanced himself from his negative influences. Realizing the positive impact, Rohan's mother requested the organization's help in enrolling her sons in a proper school, as she was illiterate and unable to do it herself. The organization's staff assisted with the admission process, including document preparation and school negotiations, ultimately securing their enrollment. Rohan was overjoyed to be admitted to school, and his mother expressed profound gratitude to the organization for their selfless support, which she described as the greatest gift of education for her children's future.

CHILDREN HUNT RIVERS FOR GOLD AND SILVER ITEMS TO SURVIVE

Talkative Reporter: Anas,
Balaknama Reporter: Kishan

When Balaknama reporters visited the settlements in the Charmurti area near Noida, they sought to understand how the children were sustaining themselves and managing their expenses. A 14-year-old boy from the settlement explained that there is a river located a short distance from the settlement. People often discard items such as money, gold, silver, or brass into this river to protect themselves from superstitions or as offerings

from their temples. Most of the children in the settlement spend their days from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM bathing in the river and searching for these discarded items. As a result, they frequently find both small and large valuables. The boy further explained that a drain has been connected to the river, making the water quite dirty. Despite this, the children dive into the filthy water to search for valuables. While doing so, they often ingest the contaminated water or get it in their eyes and ears, which sometimes leads to illness. Many people discard



items used in worship, such as old brass plates or silver objects, into the river. Objects related to superstitions, like gold or silver items worn by deceased individuals, are also thrown into the river to avoid bad omens. The children

spend their days retrieving these items and occasionally bring them home to their parents. On average, they find items worth around 100 to 150 rupees each day, which they use to support their families and buy food.

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1098

Police Helpline Number

100



GIRL DEPRIVED OF EDUCATION DUE TO FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,
Local Reporter: Shivani

When Balaknama reporter Kajal visited various settlements in Jaipur, talkative reporter Neha shared that a girl who lived near her home in Mangyawas Basti wandered around all day. To learn more about the girl, the Balaknama reporter met with Shivani (name changed) and asked her about her name and family. Eight-year-old Shivani explained that her family is from Etawah (Uttar Pradesh) and they moved to Jaipur about a year ago. They built a hut near her aunt's hut and have been living there since. She is her parents' only child, and her parents work as garbage collectors, leaving the house at 6:00 AM and returning late in the evening. Shivani takes care of all household chores such as sweeping, washing dishes, cooking, and looking after the household items, as their hut doesn't have a door. When the reporter asked if she felt scared staying alone all day at such a young age, Shivani

smiled and said that if she didn't take care of the house, who would? Her mother advised her to do the work gradually, and if any problem arises, she can go to her aunt, who lives in a nearby hut. When the Balaknama reporter asked about her education, Shivani said she used to attend the first grade at a government school in her village, but after moving here, her studies stopped, and she has forgotten everything except how to write her name. Seeing other children going to school makes her want to attend as well, but she worries about who will handle the household chores and look after the house if she goes to school. The Balaknama reporter informed Shivani about the educational center run by the Chetna organization and encouraged her to discuss it with her parents. The reporter suggested that Shivani could attend the center for a short time each day, allowing her to fulfill her responsibilities while also continuing her education.

CHILDREN REJOICE IN FINDING DISCARDED BOOKS AND BAGS AMIDST SCRAP

Talkative Reporter: Raj,
Reporter: Kishan

Everyone looks for ways to save money, but how do street and working children manage when they don't have money to buy books, notebooks, pencils, and other school supplies? Near the slum areas of Noida Sector 80, some children were seen scavenging scrap. When reporters noticed them at work, they decided to investigate and found the children looking very happy. Curious about their happiness, the reporters learned a startling truth. Veer (name changed), a 12-year-old boy, explained, "We live in the slums of Noida with our parents. I am currently in the fifth grade, and we attend school in the morning. After school, we go out to collect scrap. Our family business involves collecting and sorting scrap from various places such as markets, neighborhoods, factory areas, and construction sites. We find all sorts of scrap, including plastic, metal,



mattresses, glass bottles, books, notebooks, pencils, and more. After collecting, we sort through the scrap, separating different types. Often, we come across educational materials like books, notebooks, pencils, colors, geometry boxes, and bags. Some notebooks are partially used, some completely empty, and some have a few pages filled in. We even find used color pencils,

which we keep for ourselves. Sometimes, we find old bags in usable condition, although their zippers might be broken. People throw them away, but we clean and use them. Since we often don't have money to buy these items, finding them in the scrap saves us a lot of money, reducing our need to buy supplies from shops. This discovery makes us very happy."

CHILD FORCED TO SELL LEMONS

Balaknama: Reporter Raj
Kishore, Local Reporter:
Badshah

When the reporters from our Balaknama newspaper visited the Jalvayu Community in Gurugram, they discovered children engaged in work, making a living by selling



lemons. On learning about this, our reporters decided to investigate further and visited the spot where the child set up his cart and sold lemons. During the conversation, our reporter asked the child why he was doing this work at such a young age. The child responded that he was simply fulfilling his family's responsibilities and that whatever money he earned from selling lemons, he gave it to his household. The reporter asked how many hours he worked. The child explained that he set up his cart in the morning, sold lemons until the evening, then returned

home, and repeated the same routine the next day. The reporter then asked if he felt hot working from morning to evening under the scorching sun. The child bravely said that he didn't feel hot because of the work. Otherwise, when it gets too hot, they move to a shady spot and set up their cart there. The reporter then asked if he attended school. The child said that he wanted to study but didn't have enough money or time, and due to the poor economic condition of his household, he couldn't go to school. Our reporter informed him about a social organization that helps underprivileged children get admission to government schools. Until their admission is secured, these children can come to our organization to study. Additionally, our organization provides various games and activities like badminton and carrom board, and also conducts training on children's rights from time to time. Hearing this, the child said that what the reporter suggested was good, but he would discuss it with his family and get back to them.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN COPING WITH HEAT IN SCORCHING WEATHER

Reporter Kishan

Let's explore the current situation of children living in affluent households versus street and working children during the harsh summer sun. As the intense heat of May has led to school holidays, Balaknama reporters toured Nizamuddin area in Delhi to learn how children are spending their time. Children from well-off families are enjoying their summer vacations by visiting cool, snowy places with their grandparents, uncles, aunts, and parents, such as Nainital, Shimla, and Mussoorie. On the other hand, let's see how street and working children are spending their summer break. A 12-year-old girl working as



a rag picker in Nizamuddin shared her daily routine: "We start collecting scrap from 6:00 AM, picking various kinds of waste. The blazing sun makes it extremely hot, and we often get very thirsty. When we approach street vendors for water, they chase us away and refuse to let us drink because of our appearance. This forces us to drink from the taps near large houses, where the water

is so hot that it's difficult to drink, but we have no choice." These children don't have enough money to buy a bottle of water. While observing these conditions, the children mentioned that if water pots could be placed at different locations for street and working children, it would provide significant relief from these challenges during the heat.

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ADVERSITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES DEPRIVED GIRL OF EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Sarita

Many families come to Chakkarpur village in Gurugram to make a living, and Amrita's (name changed) family is one of them. During a visit to the slums of Chakkarpur by Balaknama reporter Sarita, she met 11-year-old Amrita. Originally from Khagaria district in Bihar, Amrita studied up to fifth grade in a non-governmental school in her village. Amrita shared that her mother sold

fish and her father worked as a laborer. One day, her father died in an accident on his way back from work, leaving the family in dire straits with all responsibilities falling on her mother. To help, Amrita's cousin brought the family to Chakkarpur in Gurugram so they could find work and a place to live. Here, Amrita's mother started working as a house cleaner to support the family. As the eldest daughter, Amrita took on the role of caretaker, looking after her



two younger sisters, aged 5 and 3, and managing household chores such as cooking.

Amrita further explained that one day, a worker from the Chetna organization visited

their slum and invited her to study at their educational center. She attended for a few days, but her mother soon forbade her from going due to her responsibilities at home. Consequently, despite her desire, Amrita could not continue her education. When reporter Sarita asked Amrita about her dreams, she revealed that she wants to become a police officer to fulfill her father's dream and also to ensure her younger sisters receive an education.

CHILDREN DEPRIVED OF BASIC SANITATION FACILITIES STRUGGLE FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE



Talkative Report- Chaman and Komal

By adopting hygiene practices in our daily lives, we can protect ourselves from various diseases and stay healthy. Hygiene helps prevent the spread of diseases and supports good health. However, many settlements, especially slum areas, still lack these essential basic facilities. Today, we are discussing one such slum in Delhi. When Balaknama reporters spoke to the children living in this community, they revealed that the residents live in small rented rooms without private toilets, and most

people work as labourers. As a result, they are forced to live in these one-room homes, and all members, young and old, use public toilets. Chaman, an 11-year-old talkative reporter, shared, "Even though there are two public toilets available in the community, there is extreme crowding in the mornings, making it difficult for children to use the toilet on time. Consequently, they often arrive late to school or sometimes miss school or institutional education centers altogether. Additionally, the sanitation conditions of these public toilets are extremely poor, and there is a lack of

water, causing filth to spread throughout the community. Due to these issues, children are forced to defecate outside quickly, which makes them fall sick frequently. Many children suffer from symptoms like vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, and stomach problems. They are unable to perform well in their daily activities due to constant stomach pain." Komal (name changed), a 12-year-old, also mentioned, "When we return from school and go to the toilet, there is no water, and the toilet is dirty, so we avoid using it." The community lacks any medical dispensary or hospital, although there is a small clinic in the neighbouring area, which often remains crowded due to changing weather conditions, with most people seeking medical aid. Only a few people in the community have their toilets, but they do not allow others to use them, affecting the mental health of the children. This situation also impacts their ability to focus on their studies and overall well-being.



CHILD LEADER'S QUICK THINKING PREVENTS SETTLEMENT DISASTER

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal, Talkative Reporter: Sandeep

As we all know, a gas cylinder used in household kitchens can be extremely dangerous if it explodes or if a gas leak catches fire. Such incidents can not only harm the inhabitants of the house but also pose a serious threat to the surrounding community. Recently, there was an incident involving a gas cylinder fire. In this context, Talkative Reporter Sandeep reported that all residents of the Prem Nagar slum in Jaipur use gas for cooking. One day, a fire broke out in the gas cylinder at the home of Amar (name changed), a friend of mine who lives in a nearby slum. Amar's parents were at work, and he was alone at home. Feeling hungry, Amar decided to cook Maggi noodles. After cooking, he accidentally left the gas on and got busy eating his Maggi while watching TV. After some time, smoke began to emerge from the cylinder. When Amar noticed this, he rushed

outside and started shouting. Seeing smoke and sparks coming from the cylinder, the slum dwellers panicked and evacuated their homes. At that moment, Sandeep, the leader of Badhte Kadam, informed a nearby shopkeeper about the fire extinguisher numbers to prevent the fire from spreading. The shopkeeper called the fire department, and within approximately 30 minutes, the fire brigade arrived and managed to control the smoke and sparks from the cylinder. Once the situation calmed down, the shopkeeper asked the boy Sandeep how he knew about the fire extinguisher numbers. Sandeep explained that he attends classes at the Chetna organization's education center, where they teach various emergency numbers, including those for the police, child helpline, fire extinguisher, and ambulance. The shopkeeper praised Sandeep for his quick actions and encouraged him to continue his studies diligently.

BOY LEAVES CHILD LABOR TO RETURN TO EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal, Talkative Reporter: Gautam

Balaknama reporter Kajal visited the Mangyawas slum in Jaipur and spoke with the children about their studies. During the visit, she learned that a 10-year-old boy named Ajay (name changed) had dropped out of school to work in a shop to buy a smartphone. However, he has now returned to studying at the Chetna Ngo education center. Reporter Kajal asked the children how this happened. A 12-year-old boy named Gautam explained that Ajay had not attended the education center for about 15 days. The reason was that Ajay's 19-year-old older brother Vijay had a smartphone, which he never let Ajay use. Frustrated, Ajay



decided to earn money and buy his own smartphone. He found a job at a grocery shop, earning 3000 rupees a month. Chetna ngo workers tried to convince Ajay's parents and spoke to Ajay about the harmful effects of child labor. They explained that he was too young to work and that child labor is illegal. They also highlighted

that working as a child can hinder educational, physical, and mental development. Ajay was told that while his older brother could use a smartphone, it was not suitable for children due to potential harm to eyesight and negative impacts on language and physical development, sometimes even leading to serious health issues. After continuous counseling, Ajay started attending the education center again and is now happily studying. His experience has become a lesson for other children as well. Ajay now advocates that childhood should be spent playing and studying, not working. He expressed that he has learned his lesson and will focus on his education in the future.

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CHILDREN PROMOTE WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY AWARENESS

Balaknama Reporters: Kajal, Rajkishor, Talkative Reporters: Manish, Sumit, Azrul

The celebration of Environment Day began with the aim of protecting nature from increasing pollution. Due to rising pollution, nature is in danger. Nature provides every essential thing for every living being to live. If nature is affected, life will inevitably be affected as well. Therefore, it is crucial to instil good habits in children and educate them about environmental conservation. As part of this effort, during the monthly life skills workshops for street and working children, their attention was drawn to the importance of World Environment Day. They were informed about why World Environment Day is celebrated and how children can contribute to environmental conservation. In the confined area of Jamdoli settlement in Jaipur, small houses are built



and there is a lack of shady trees. Thus, an activity was conducted where street and working children planted saplings. All the children collectively watered the soil to make it moist, dug holes for planting, and planted two saplings. Children Deepak and Manish took the responsibility of watering, fertilizing, and maintaining the plants periodically. Additionally, in the Lakhesra slum, children organized a rally to raise community awareness about the environment and chanted

slogans for environmental protection. Children Hanif and Muskan stated that they would focus on environmental protection and would make the community aware of disposing of waste in designated areas or bins, and they committed to planting at least five trees during the rainy season. Similarly, children from other settlements created posters, planted saplings, and spread the message of environmental conservation through rallies on World Environment Day, understanding the

significance of this day. In Gurugram, members of Badhte Kadam also launched a public awareness campaign on World Environment Day. On this occasion, children went to various places, neighborhoods, and streets to explain the importance of environmental conservation. The children engaged in various activities such as painting slogans, and art and craft related to the environment, and organized tree planting programs in the community. Each child planted a sapling and took an oath saying, "We will never cut green trees and plants, as they are very beneficial for us. Without trees and plants, we cannot survive." On this occasion, Rajkishor, a reporter from Balaknama, highlighted the importance of the environment to the children, stating that only by protecting the environment can we bring happiness into our lives. He pointed out that the problems of dryness and desertification are increasing, and continuous exploitation of the environment for food, water, and housing is causing climate change. If this continues, life will become unsustainable. Air pollution is making it difficult to breathe, leading to various diseases, and

underground water is getting contaminated. Clean drinking water is becoming scarce as rivers are getting polluted and drying up. Contaminated water affects children more quickly, making them sick. Pollution is causing holes in the ozone layer, leading to diseases like cancer, which are expensive to treat, leaving the poor without options. Humans are continuously cutting down forests to meet their needs, leading to the extinction of wildlife and disrupting the natural balance. If this continues, life will become impossible due to extreme heat, floods, droughts, or earthquakes. Fundamental human needs such as food, clean drinking water, pure air to breathe, and rain for crops are all provided by the environment. Humans, animals, and plants all depend on the environment. A clean environment is essential for life. To achieve this, we must all work towards environmental conservation by reducing electricity usage, not polluting water, minimizing the use of plastics, and preventing the cutting of plants while planting new ones. Only then can we ensure a sustainable future.

CHILD TRAUMATIZED AFTER ATTEMPTED ABUSE WHILE USING TOILET

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal, Local Reporter: Naeem

A frightening incident occurred with 12-year-old Naeem (name changed), who resides in the JDA slum with his family and studies in grade 6. One day, after returning from school, he went out to use the public toilet near the stand. On his way, he met a friend who accompanied him. Naeem explained that the toilets were very dirty and unbearable, so he and his friend decided to fill a bottle from a tap outside and head to the nearby forest instead. While there, an intoxicated middle-aged man spotted Naeem and approached him, grabbing his hand and offering him twenty rupees to follow him into the forest. Terrified, Naeem and his friend started crying and struggled



to free themselves. Naeem managed to break free and ran away, while the intoxicated man fled towards the road. Naeem ran to his uncle and tearfully recounted the incident. His uncle was initially perplexed by Naeem's intense fear, as he had never seen him so terrified. Understanding the situation as best as Naeem could explain, his uncle, along with a few others, quickly apprehended the perpetrator and handed

him over to the police after a brief altercation. Naeem's father has filed a complaint against the accused. Naeem remains severely traumatized and frightened by the incident. It has become a challenge for him to go out, and although his family and others are trying to help him recover, the event has left a profound impact on him. This incident prompts a serious reflection on our society's shortcomings. If we fail to address such issues, we cannot consider ourselves a civilized society. The lack of proper sanitation facilities, the prevalence of open defecation, and the menace of intoxicated individuals threaten the safety and well-being of our children. Such incidents can be prevented with community vigilance and proactive measures, yet we continue to fall short.



FAMILY DECIDED CHILD TO WORK AFTER NINTH GRADE FAILURE

Balaknama Reporter - Hans Kumar and Talkative Reporter - Altaf

When Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited Amar Park in West Delhi, local reporter Altaf informed him that he has a friend named Javed (name changed) who also lives in Amar Park's slum area. Recently, he failed his ninth-grade exams. As a result, his parents have decided to have him work in their grocery store to help with their financial situation. Despite suggestions and encouragement from neighbors, school teachers, and community members who believe Javed is still young and capable of passing ninth grade next year, ultimately the family has decided not to

give him another chance in education. Javed's father says, "We appreciate the advice and support from our neighbors and community members, but we believe Javed's time is better spent helping the family financially." Seeing young children in slums like Amar Park doing odd jobs to support their families is common, but unfortunately, in such situations, their education often takes a back seat. However, it is heartening to see the community coming together to support Javed's education, but ultimately, it depends on the family's decision, which they consider best for their circumstances. We can only hope that Javed continues to strive for a better future.

THE TRAGIC DEATH OF A CHILD DUE TO A BUILDING COLLAPSE



Balaknama Reporter-Kishor and Talkative reporter-Azrul

How does a lively child suddenly become silent forever? This is the heartbreaking story of how a child climbed an under-construction building, only

to slip and fall, leading to his immediate death on the spot. This tragic incident occurred in the slums behind Wazirabad Sector 52 in Gurugram, Haryana. Upon receiving the news, our Balaknama newspaper reporter visited the slums of Wazirabad. The

local children recounted that a few days ago, some children from nearby slums entered an under-construction building to collect scrap materials like iron, cloth, and wood. One of the children climbed to the top of the building, lost his footing, and fell to his death instantly. When our reporter investigated further, speaking with the slum residents, it was confirmed that a child indeed went into the under-construction building, slipped, and tragically fell to his death. The child's family is inconsolable, and the entire community is in shock, mourning the loss of a happy, playful childhood cut short by a fatal accident while trying to meet his needs.

CHILDREN STILL UNSAFE IN PUBLIC TOILETS OF WEST DELHI

Talkative Reporter-Haleema

Children in the West Delhi community continue to face unsafe conditions. This report focuses on the experiences of two children, 13-year-old Ravi Kumar (name changed) and 11-year-old Rohan (name changed). The family recently moved from their village to the Zakheera slum in Delhi, where they now live in a rented house without toilet facilities. As a result, the brothers are compelled to use a nearby public toilet. One night, Ravi urgently needed to use the toilet, so he woke

his younger brother Rohan and took him along. Upon arrival, they found the toilet eerily quiet, occupied only by a man smoking marijuana. The man stared menacingly at the boys, frightening them, but their need was urgent, so they entered the toilet despite their fear. After finishing, they noticed the man was still there, blocking their path. The man, clearly intoxicated, grabbed them and began hurling abuses, demanding their mother's mobile number and their home address. He threatened to kidnap them and extort money



from their parents. Ravi bravely confronted the man, refusing to give his mother's number and asserting that they wouldn't be kidnapped. The man, however, grabbed

them even tighter, calling his friend over to help with the kidnapping. The boys were terrified but saw another man approaching the toilet. They screamed for help, explaining

that the intoxicated man was threatening to kidnap them. The approaching man intervened, scaring off the drugged man who shoved the boys and fled. Ravi and Rohan thanked the stranger and ran home to tell their mother what had happened. Their mother, shaken by the incident, assured them that they would soon move to a safer place and build a toilet at home, promising they wouldn't have to use the public facilities again. Hearing this, the boys felt a deep sense of relief and security in their mother's reassuring embrace.

GIRL RESCUES BIRDS, INSPIRES COMPASSION AND COOPERATION



Talkative Reporter: Geeta and Reporter: Kishan

During the scorching summer months of June and July in North India, even humans struggle with the intense heat, often falling unconscious. Imagine the impact this has on animals and birds. While reporters were touring a settlement in Noida, they

observed some children playing with a small pigeon in a field, trying to make it fly. When Balaknama reporters approached, a 13-year-old girl shared her story. She explained that they live in a nearby slum and regularly travel 200 meters to fetch water. One day, despite the midday heat making them reluctant, they ventured out to the water tank. There, they

found a small pigeon lying unconscious in the sun. They sprinkled water on the pigeon, reviving it, but noticed it couldn't fly. They filled their containers and brought the pigeon home. Every day, they now feed the bird and take it to the nearby field, trying to help it fly. The pigeon appears uninjured but perhaps too young to fly yet. The girl expressed joy at saving the bird's life. This wasn't the first time they had rescued animals; they had previously cared for other birds and animals in need. However, the girl noted a concerning trend in their slum: people often capture injured or unconscious birds and animals and kill them for food. This deeply troubles her, as she believes that just like humans, these creatures have lives worth protecting. She pleaded for people to spare these animals and try to save them instead.

STRAY DOGS CREATED PANIC, BIT 8 PEOPLE INCLUDING 5 CHILDREN

Balaknama Reporter:Kajal, Talkative Reporter:Kanha



The threat of stray dogs is looming so large in the slums of West Delhi that five children living in Nehru Camp have been bitten by stray dogs due to which the children have stopped going to school. The people of the community have complained about this to the MCD many times but people are not getting any relief from anywhere. Three children studying at the centre of Chetna Sanstha have also been bitten by dogs. Jyoti, whose age is 12 years, says that she feeds biscuits or bread to the dogs every day but recently when she was going to the toilet, two dogs suddenly attacked her in which Jyoti got badly injured. Jyoti immediately went to Acharya Bhikshu Hospital in Moti Nagar and got an injection due to which she is feeling a lot of pain. The danger of dog bites also remains

among the children living in the community and due to this the children are not going to school. I, Balaknama reporter Asif, would like to draw the attention of the government to this through the Balaknama newspaper and I hope that the slums of West Delhi will soon get relief from the terror of stray dogs.

THE CHILDREN COLLABORATED TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS TOGETHER

Balaknama Reporter - Chand

Street and working children often face new challenges daily. Their lives are far from easy, requiring them to struggle more than other children just to secure basic necessities. Such struggles have been particularly evident among the street and working children of Lawrence Road in West Delhi, where small, cramped slums lie adjacent to the railway tracks. The narrow lanes in these slums have open drains filled with mud, which often overflow and flood the streets. Despite numerous complaints from the local residents to the municipal corporation, no action was taken to clean the drains. The children have had to live in these unsanitary conditions for a long time, facing significant difficulties moving around.



The mud outside their homes made it almost impossible for them to enter without stepping on large stones. Small children frequently fell into the mud, leading to illnesses and respiratory problems due to

the stench. Realizing that no one was going to resolve their issue, the children decided to take matters into their own hands. They discussed their problem and planned to clean up the mess themselves.



Wearing gloves, the children started scooping the mud into buckets and disposing of it in nearby fields. Gradually, they managed to clean the area outside their homes. As a result, they no longer face

difficulties moving around, and their health has improved. By working together, these children effectively solved their problem, demonstrating the power of collaboration and self-reliance.

WORKING CHILDREN PARTICIPATED IN SUMMER CAMP

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Ayush

Summer camps are renowned for providing a safe and entertaining educational environment where children can gain confidence while learning new skills. These camps offer opportunities for children to develop various social skills such as communication, education, and creativity. They allow children to explore new opportunities, spend time in different environments, and try new things, all of which are essential for building self-confidence and independence, benefits that



last a lifetime. In line with this, Balaknama reporters received information from the Ganeshpuri slum in Jaipur that street and working children participated in a summer

camp for the first time. To understand the children's experiences, reporters visited the slum and inquired about the duration of the camp, the activities conducted, and the

number of participants. A 9-year-old boy, Ayush, shared that a summer camp was organized at the government school operating in their slum during the summer holidays. This camp provided the children of the slum with their first opportunity to participate in a summer camp. Various activities such as drawing, painting, dance, crafts, and self-defense were taught. Although the camp was supposed to last for a month, it was abruptly closed after 15 days due to an intense heatwave. Ayush participated in the self-defense activity, emphasizing that self-defense not only teaches children

to protect themselves from physical attacks but also helps them face everyday challenges with resilience. A 12-year-old girl, Poonam, expressed her love for dancing and how thrilled she was to have a place where she could learn to dance in a group setting with other children. Other girls from the slum also participated in this activity, finding joy in learning and performing dance together. Overall, about 25 children from the slum participated in various activities during this summer camp. Despite the camp being cut short, the children cherished the experience and the new skills they learned.

STREET CHILDREN UPCYCLE SCRAP INTO USEFUL INNOVATIONS

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Hanif

The art of turning waste into useful items is a remarkable skill that allows us to repurpose discarded objects instead of throwing them away. This practice not only helps in reducing pollution but also transforms useless items into valuable products. In this vein, the street and working children of Lakhesra slum in Jaipur have created various useful items like coolers, vegetable cutting machines, speakers, and toys from waste materials. When



Balaknama reporter Deepak visited Lakhesra slum, he

met 12-year-old talkative reporter Hanif. Hanif shared

that his friend Arun is very talented and always engaged in creating something new. This summer, Arun used empty paper boxes, old motors, and wires to craft useful items. To learn more, the reporter spoke to 8-year-old Arun. Arun explained that he loves making useful items from waste and dreams of owning a large factory that produces electronic items one day. This time, he made a mixer from an empty yogurt container, blades, and wires for cutting garlic and onions. He also created a speaker using an empty juice box, a

battery, and a mobile charger plate. Additionally, he built a cooler using an empty cardboard box, a motor, wires, and drinking straws. Arun not only works on his projects but also helps other children in the slum create various items. Together, the children have made toys like guns, bottle lights, balloons with lights, and houses from cardboard boxes. Through these activities, the children not only foster their creativity but also learn the importance of recycling and the potential of repurposing waste into something valuable.

THE CAMPAIGN BROKE GIRLS' SILENCE AND TAUGHT THEM MENSTRUAL HEALTH IMPORTANCE

Reporter- Sonia and Shagufta

Today we will talk about the girls in our community and how they face the challenges, difficulties, and myths associated with menstruation. Life for street and working children is already quite challenging. They try to face every difficulty, and through these efforts, an important issue emerges that the community hesitates to discuss. They feel that discussing this topic will embarrass them, spread misinformation about them in the community, and discussing menstruation issues according to them could increase the likelihood of children going astray. 13-year-old Sonia and some of her friends participated in a training session on menstruation organized by the awareness organization in June. In this session, these girls discussed the problems

faced during menstruation. In the workshop, the girls shared various issues, such as not having a safe place to change pads during menstruation. Due to the crowd in nearby toilets, they often have to stand for long periods. In addition, they are also afraid that sanitary pads may fall from their hands while going to the toilet. Sonia and her friends also mentioned that they did not have much important information before participating in this session. They did not know that pads should be changed every 4 to 5 hours. Their thinking has changed regarding prevalent myths in the community, such as not touching pickles, refraining from any kind of makeup during these days, not cooking in the kitchen, etc. In addition, they have also learned about the importance of hygiene during the menstrual cycle and menstruation.



They have understood the importance of clean pads and clean undergarments. They said that no one in our community and families had ever openly discussed this with them nor provided complete information. We are proud that we participated in all the sessions provided by the awareness organization. Now we have become aware of many facts related to menstruation and will try to provide

information to other children like us so that they too can live a healthy life. In a similar vein, 15-year-old Sana from Jakhira Basti in West Delhi has shed light on the challenges faced by young girls in her community by sharing her personal struggle. Sana revealed that she had to hide her menstruation from her father and brother by using makeshift pads, concealing her difficulties. Due to fear and stigma from

male family members, Sana's mother had advised her to keep her menstruation a secret. However, with courage, Sana declared that this issue is not confined to just her home but is a widespread problem in her entire community. Women and girls in the community often prioritize household chores over their own health during menstruation. They use makeshift pads or cloths because purchasing sanitary pads is considered a luxury or they are unable to afford them. Sana recalled instances where girls were told to buy pads from the market only when a female shopkeeper was available. Sana's story underscores the urgent need for awareness and support for menstrual health and hygiene in marginalized communities like Jakhira slum. Her bravery will undoubtedly inspire others to break their silence and demand change.

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.

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