

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.

PARK CONSTRUCTION UNDER BRIDGE SADDENS STREET CHILDREN, ASK "WHERE WILL WE GO?"

Balaknama reporters—Kishan, Sarita, Shambhu, Hansraj, and Kajal

The path of life is very challenging. Living this life in the right way is a significant concern for humans, meaning that in navigating through life, we have to face numerous problems. To sustain life, three things are considered most essential: food, clothing, and shelter. Here, we will be focusing on one of life's basic necessities—'shelter'. If you are living in your own home or in a rented house, you may be experiencing a certain level of comfort and peace. But if you don't have any shelter or a roof over your head, where will you stay? It's a simple fact that unless you have a rented room or your own home, you would be living on the streets, enduring many hardships. Here, we are discussing those children who live under the open sky, on the roadside, or beneath flyovers. When Balaknama reporters visited South Delhi and tried to learn about the places where street and working children

are currently living with their families by the roadside or under flyovers, they spoke to many children living under a flyover. One by one, the children shared their experiences with the reporter. Sumit (name changed), a 14-year-old boy, said that as everyone knows, Delhi is undergoing a process to make it a 'Clean Delhi'. In such circumstances, there are many families living by the roadside and under flyovers, but where can they go? Over 150 families live under this flyover, and they engage in different types of work. Some families sell stones (gems), while in most families, both adults and children resort to begging. These are the activities that sustain our families. Fifteen-year-old Roshni (name changed) shared, "Currently, we are facing a very serious issue. A few days ago, some policemen came at night, and they took all the families living under the flyover to the police station with their belongings. They ordered all the families to vacate the area under the



flyover, stating that a park area would be built in the center of the roads where flowers and plants would be planted. Therefore, we must leave this place." Thirteen-year-old Rohit (name changed) expressed his concern, saying, "We are deeply worried about where we will go. There are several night shelters near this area, and the policemen suggested we move to those shelters. However, the environment in the night shelters is not good. Everyone stays in the open, and there are no enclosed rooms. People openly engage in

indecent behavior, which has a bad impact on the children. Another problem is that we have to keep our belongings out in the open, and there is no proper arrangement for securing them. As a result, many of our items get stolen. Because of these issues, we do not consider going to the night shelters as a viable option." Seventeen-year-old Sonia (name changed) added, "All the families living here are poor. As everyone is being removed from this place, the police officers have suggested that we move into

rented houses in nearby villages. However, most of us work on the streets, either selling trinkets or begging. The money we earn from these activities is just enough to cover basic household expenses. The reason we stay here, despite the challenges, is that we don't have to pay rent. If we move into rented rooms, we simply don't have enough money to pay rent each month. This is why all the families, including ours, are deeply concerned and unsure about what will happen next." The children and the families living under the flyover expressed a collective concern: "Every year, when the cold season comes, the government provides small tents along the roadsides for those living under the flyovers and on the streets to protect them from the cold. Our appeal is that, just as the government sets up tents for us during winter, if they could provide us with shelter in the form of tents now, we wouldn't have to face so many difficulties."

CHILDREN FILLING STREET POTHoles WITH SOIL IN BANJARA MARKET

Balaknama Reporter – Rajkishore, Talkative Reporter

When Rajkishore, a reporter from our Balaknama newspaper, visited the slums in the Gurugram climate zone, he discovered that some children were engaged in cleaning work in Banjara Market, and many of them were also helping set up shops. During his visit, two children were spotted carrying some materials towards Banjara Market. When Rajkishore spoke to them about their work in the market, it was revealed that they were heading there to fill the potholes with soil. The children shared that they



do this work voluntarily and use the earnings to cover their expenses, handing over the money to their parents. They also mentioned that after completing this task, they help set up shops in the market, earning around 50 rupees per day, which helps cover their shop setup and daily living expenses.

INNOCENT CHILDHOOD VICTIMIZED BY NEGLIGENCE AND ABUSE

Talkative Reporter: Mausami, Balaknama Reporter: Sarita

When Balaknama reporter Sarita visited the Palda Dhani community in Gurugram, the local correspondent Mausami shared a heartbreaking story about her friend who has four brothers. Recently, her father, after drinking, engaged in violent arguments with her mother, which was unlike his previous behavior. Shockingly, he then left her mother and married another woman. In a conversation with the children, they revealed, "My dad used to hit my mom and us after drinking, and recently he had a big fight and left to marry someone else. Now he has severed all ties with us. We don't like this situation at all because we are five siblings, and we worry about



how our mom will take care of us alone since dad has completely refused to provide any financial support." The children expressed their challenges: "We face many difficulties without our father. I have two younger brothers who are only three or four years old, and I have to take care of them. I also need to cook for the family because my mom works cleaning houses and doesn't have time

for household chores. If she doesn't go to work, how will we manage our expenses and have food to eat?" Since their father remarried, the eldest brother, who is just 14 years old, has had to start working because their mother's earnings are insufficient for their household needs. The children also endure taunts from others, being teased about their father's second marriage and abandonment. "They say, 'Your dad is so bad; he left you all behind.' Hearing this makes us feel terrible. We just wish our dad would come back. No father should ever be away from his children; they should always love and care for them and fulfill their needs. Parents have a duty to provide their children with good food, clothes, and education."

WORKING CHILDREN FORCED TO PERFORM ROADSIDE STUNTS TO SURVIVE

Balaknama Reporter –
Rajkishore, Talkative Reporter
– Vishnu

During a visit to the slums of Wazirabad, Gurugram, Balaknama reporter Rajkishore learned from local children about a girl who performs rope-walking stunts. Balancing pots on her head, she walks on a tightrope to entertain crowds. She travels with her parents to different areas, showcasing her stunts, and whatever money they earn, she hands over to her family. Intrigued by the story, Rajkishore went to meet the girl in Wazirabad. Upon arrival, he saw the young girl,

as described, balancing pots on her head while walking on the rope. Her parents stood nearby, playing music to draw attention to her performance, hoping the onlookers would give her money. A small crowd had gathered, including local shopkeepers, who gave her 5 to 10 rupees to encourage her. The sound of applause further boosted the atmosphere. The girl skillfully walked the rope without any support, captivating the audience. When Rajkishore spoke to her, she said, "We want to study, but we don't have the money. If I don't perform these stunts and help my family, where will the money come from?"



This is our livelihood, as my parents don't know any other work to support us. I want to go to school and study, but what can I do? My parents can't afford our expenses. I

have two siblings and an ailing grandfather, and the money we earn from performing goes towards his medicines." With a heavy heart, the girl shared, "Who would want to

do such dangerous work? We are forced to do this because we have no choice." When asked about the difficulties she faces while performing on the streets, she replied, "Yes, of course, there are many challenges. People don't let us perform on the road. When we set up for the show, locals harass us and even demand money. If we don't pay them, they drive us away. Some people demand that we perform first before they allow us to set up. Whatever little we earn, we use to buy food for the family. I wish my father could get a good job so that I can leave all of this behind and go to school."

STUDYING REGULARLY IN ADVERSE CONDITIONS IS ALSO A STRUGGLE

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Arun

Balaknama reporter visited several slums in Jaipur. During one of these visits, when reporter Deepak arrived at the Haat-Bazaar in the Jamdoli slum, he met 12-year-old Varun (name changed), who was loudly calling out to sell balloons. The reporter asked Varun whether he attended school and which class he was in. Varun then shared his life experiences with the reporter, explaining that his parents work as laborers, but they don't always get daily wages. In such situations, managing household expenses becomes very difficult. To support his family, Varun sells balloons and toys in the Haat-Bazaar on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays. Varun mentioned that he sells around 15 toys a day, each priced at approximately 40 rupees. This way, he helps his family financially while continuing his education. He attends school regularly and, as Sunday is already a holiday,



he takes half-day leaves on Tuesdays and Saturdays to sell toys at the market. However, he often has to come up with new excuses to get these half-day leaves, and this has been going on for almost a year. His teachers are aware of his family's situation, so they allow him the time off. Varun proudly shared that he passed his 5th-grade board exams with good marks last year and is now studying in 6th grade. Enthusiastically, Varun expressed his determination to continue his education and one day become a soldier.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN SHARE EXPERIENCES AT POLICE INTERFACE PROGRAM

Balaknama Reporter: Hans
Kumar

During his visit to the Zakhira and Amar Park areas of Delhi, Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar gathered experiences shared by street and working children. The children talked about their participation in the police interface program organized by CHETNA NGO at Sarai Rohilla Police Station in North West Delhi. The program aimed to bridge the gap between children and law enforcement. The children explained how they learned about the role of the police in maintaining law and order, their rights, and how to approach the police in case of emergencies. They were also educated about the importance of staying away from crime and the consequences of getting involved in illegal activities. One of the children, 11-year-old Kalam (name changed), said, "We visited the police station and saw the control room, lock-up, and other facilities. We met police officers who shared their experiences and guided



us." The children also had the opportunity to meet the Juvenile Welfare Officer (JWO), who informed them about their rights and how to handle situations where they might face abuse. 12-year-old Sonu (name changed) shared, "The JWO explained to us how to report abuse and seek help when facing difficulties." Other children also expressed their experiences, as follows: "I never knew that police officers could be so friendly and helpful. They taught us how to protect ourselves and what to

do in dangerous situations." - Kishan Kant (name changed) "Earlier, I used to be scared of the police, but now I feel comfortable approaching them. They are our friends." - Rohan (name changed) "I was very happy to visit the police station and meet the officers. They are very kind and good people." - Rekha (name changed) This police interface program is part of CHETNA's continuous efforts to connect children with law enforcement and promote a safe community for all.

CHILDREN FALLING ILL DUE TO ACCUMULATING GARBAGE PILES OUTSIDE SLUMS

Talkative Reporter – Meenakshi,
Balaknama Reporter – Sarita

During a visit to the Ghasola community in Gurugram (Haryana), Balaknama reporter Sarita met a 12-year-old girl named Meena (name changed). Meena shared, "I study at CHETNA's alternative education center located in the Ghasola community, but all of us living in the slums are deeply troubled by the filth around us." She explained that people from far-off places come



and dump their garbage near the slums, leaving the community to deal with the

stench and pollution, which makes breathing difficult. As a result, many children

in the area frequently fall ill. Meena noted, "The foul smell causes infectious organisms to thrive, contaminating our food and water, making us sick." Due to poverty, the residents cannot afford to live in cleaner environments, and their current living conditions are deplorable. The children face constant risks of contracting diseases like malaria, typhoid, and chikungunya due to the unhygienic surroundings, and because they lack the means for proper treatment,

these illnesses often worsen. The garbage continues to pile up day by day, increasing both the filth and the number of diseases in the community. Despite the growing concerns, the residents feel helpless. Even the slum contractors remain silent, saying, "It's up to you to handle the situation because we only care about collecting rent from you. It doesn't matter to us how you live. If garbage is being dumped in front of the slum, it's your responsibility to take care of it."

WHY DOES THIS ALWAYS HAPPEN TO CHILDREN LIKE US?

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal
Talkative Reporter: Reshma

It is often observed that street and working children are looked down upon and treated with disdain. Recently, a story emerged where children expressed their deep attachment to a nearby park, noting how much parks have changed for the better compared to the past. Nowadays, parks have a variety of swings and play equipment for children to enjoy. However, when speaking to these children, they shared their distress, saying that they are not allowed to enjoy these swings. As soon as they enter the park,

the guard forbids them from going inside. Worse yet, when they approach the swings, well-off children and their parents yell at them, telling them to stay away. They are told, "Stay away from our children. Once our kids are done playing, then you can take your turn." But often, they wait for hours, and by evening, their turn never comes. Facing such circumstances, a Balaknama reporter spoke to children from well-off families and asked, "Why don't you let these street and working children use the swings?" The response was that these children's clothes smell foul, and if they use the swings, they could spread



germs. When the reporter asked the street and working children why they live in such conditions and why they don't keep their clothes clean, the children shared their hardship. Due to the ongoing rains, their parents are unable to clean their

clothes. Moreover, they don't have many clothes to wear—barely two or three outfits—which get dirty quickly in this weather. If their parents wash one set of clothes, it takes two or three days to dry because they live in temporary shelters with no proper place to dry

clothes. Many others face similar issues. They admitted, "Yes, our clothes do smell, but what can we do? This is our compulsion. That's why our clothes appear dirty, and when we walk to and from the park, people from the nearby society yell at us. Sometimes, they even call us beggars and scavengers. But despite facing such discrimination, we try to ignore it. We feel that this is happening to us because we live in temporary shelters and work as beggars. All we want is to be seen with equality, without discrimination. We have our struggles, but they will gradually fade, and with education, we can change our lives too."

BEGGING ISN'T OUR CHOICE, IT'S A NECESSITY



Balaknama Reporter - Shambhu

A meeting was organized by Balaknama reporters, where children actively participated and openly discussed their issues. The most pressing problem that surfaced during the meeting was that many children are forced to beg. When the reporters engaged

in detailed conversations with the children, a 12-year-old boy, Rahul (name changed), revealed, "We don't beg by choice, but rather, it is a compulsion that forces us into this work." Rahul explained, "My father is often drunk at home, and my mother works as a housemaid. However, there are times when my

mother doesn't go to work, and she forces us to go out and beg. While begging, we face many challenges. For instance, if we beg on buses, people push us off and treat us like thieves. If we try begging at the railway station, the police harass us. And when we return home empty-handed, our parents scold us, refuse to give us food, and mistreat us. If we try to seek help from someone, our parents argue with them, which is why no one is willing to help us." Rahul expressed a heartfelt plea: "We don't want to beg. We want the right to play, to enjoy life like other children, and to go to school so that we can build a bright future. We hope to escape this cycle, so we no longer have to extend our hands to beg for work or money."



SURVIVING BY SELLING GOAT MILK

Balaknama Reporter: Kishan,
Talkative Reporter -Suman

Street and working children engage in various jobs to support their families, but often face interference from ill-intentioned individuals, making their lives even more challenging. Recently, journalists visited a settlement in Noida where they noticed that many families keep goats. When they spoke to the children, a 15-year-old girl from the settlement explained that while many residents go out for work, some children in the community take care of goats. Most households in the settlement own goats, and about 500 meters away, there's a forest where children take the goats to graze. Some children take the goats to the forest early in

the morning, while others, who attend school, take them after returning home. The children also benefit from the goats by collecting milk. Some goats produce one to two glasses of milk daily, which the children sell to residents in nearby buildings. Goat milk is quite expensive in Noida, so selling just one or two glasses earns them between ₹150 to ₹200. However, the biggest concern in the settlement is the risk of theft. Whenever they tie their goats outside their homes, they constantly worry that someone might steal them. Several times, thieves have stolen goats from the settlement, and despite days of searching, they couldn't be found. Many goats have been lost this way, leaving the children and their families in constant worry and fear.

IMPACT OF PARENTAL ADDICTION ON TEENAGERS' EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter - Hans
Kumar Local Reporter - Anshika

During his visit to the N 86 Lawrence Road area in North West Delhi, Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar learned from local reporter Anshika about a heartbreaking incident involving a ten-year-old girl named Prerna (name changed), who has been denied her right to education due to her parents' alcoholism, forcing her to handle household chores. Despite her eagerness to study, Prerna's parents, both of whom are alcoholics, have failed to provide the necessary documents for her school enrollment. Worse still, she is sometimes



compelled to sell vegetables to support her family, as her father is frequently intoxicated and her mother works in a factory. This tragic situation highlights the devastating impact of addiction on children. The dependence of Prerna's parents on alcohol has not only robbed her of her childhood but also jeopardized

her future. Without access to education, Prerna's chances of achieving a better life are diminishing. The government and social organizations must intervene to ensure that Prerna receives the education she truly deserves. Additionally, rehabilitation programs and support services are crucial for individuals struggling with addiction, as they can help provide a stable environment for their children. Prerna's story underscores the urgent need for collective action to protect the rights and welfare of children affected by addiction. Can we work together to create a safer and more supportive environment for children's development?

CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS

CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE
NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY
PROBLEM.

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

CHILDREN FALLING ILL DUE TO CHANGING WEATHER



Reporter: Devi, Local Reporter: Kishan

When children lose focus on household chores or other tasks, there are often underlying reasons behind it. During a visit to the slum areas of Noida, Balaknama reporters encountered several children who did not appear healthy. Upon speaking with them, the children shared various reasons for their poor health. The reporters took the time to understand the situation in detail from each child. Fourteen-year-old Maina (name changed) explained that the weather has been changing drastically in recent times. "We are facing many challenges due to the shifting weather patterns. When it rains heavily, we children tend to play and bathe in the rain. Some of us even go out on the

streets, where the water from overflowing drains collects, and we roll around in it. As a result, we are developing skin boils and rashes. Sometimes, the day starts with intense heat, and by afternoon or evening, a few raindrops fall, only for the rain to stop suddenly. This sudden change causes steam to rise from the heated ground, and when we breathe in that hot air, it affects our ability to breathe." Maina further added, "This changing weather is having a significant impact on our health. It leaves us weak and unable to perform even basic household chores. We lack the energy to work, and many children are falling sick because of these weather fluctuations. This is why some of us are unable to attend school. To cope with this unpredictable weather, we children need rest and recovery."

CHILDREN FALLING SICK DUE TO DIRT SPREAD BY PETS IN PLAY AREAS

Talkative Reporter: Sajni, Reporter: Kishan

You might have noticed that some places remain clean, while a few careless individuals can turn them dirty in no time. People often litter, leave trash, and spread waste in clean areas, yet they shy away from standing or sitting in those filthy surroundings. During a visit to the slums near Noida Sector 101, reporters spoke to children about a significant issue they are facing. One child explained, "It's currently September, and the heat and humidity are making life unbearable in our slum. During the day, the humidity becomes so intense that we can't stay outside for even a minute. To escape this humidity, we look for a clean place with trees and greenery. There is such a spot about 150 meters away from our slum, which has a road lined with big trees and grassy areas." "Whenever the humidity rises, most of the children and even the adults from the slum go to this clean spot to relax. However, there are large buildings nearby, and many residents there keep dogs and cats as pets. These residents bring their



dogs to this area for walks. While we are trying to find relief from the heat, these people allow their dogs to defecate and urinate all over the place where we relax." "They don't just bring their pets; they often come with over 50 dogs at a time under the pretext of walking them. Their reasoning is that if they take them into the jungle, there's a risk of wild insects

getting on them. So, they prefer bringing them to this clean area, but this has led to a lot of filth accumulating here. Now, we can neither sit comfortably nor lie down." Children being children often play in these dirty areas, getting exposed to all kinds of filth and waste. This has resulted in many of the slum children falling ill due to these unsanitary conditions.

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Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishore
Talkative Reporter: Sumit

When Balaknama reporter Rajkishore visited the slums of the Climate area in Gurugram, he discovered that some teenagers aged 14-15 were working in delivery jobs. Upon questioning about where they got their bikes and whether they had licenses, it was revealed that they did not own bikes. Instead, they rented battery-

operated scooters for their deliveries. The children also mentioned that some of them attended school while juggling delivery jobs. They recounted an incident where a boy's battery-operated scooter broke down in the middle of the road while making a delivery, almost leading to an accident due to the vehicles coming from behind. The children pointed out that there was no requirement for a license

to operate these scooters, allowing anyone to ride them. During the discussion, it was noted that some children woke up as early as 4-5 a.m. to deliver milk, even though their parents never encouraged them to take up such work. They shared the story of a ninth-grade student who worked for a delivery company called Blinkit. One day, his teacher called to inquire why he had not been attending

school. He replied that he was unwell, and the next day he fabricated a false medical report to present at school. When his teacher reviewed the report, it turned out to be entirely fake.

This situation highlights how these children, grappling with economic hardships, become trapped in cycles of poverty, often distancing themselves from their education and blurring the lines between right and wrong.

CHILDREN SET UP STALLS AT FAIRS SELLING CHOWMEIN, TOYS, AND MORE

Talkative Reporter: Aman,
Balaknama Reporter: Sarita

Near Goga Colony, there's a temple that hosts the Goga Fair every year. During a visit to this colony in Gurugram (Haryana), reporter Sarita found many slum children setting up stalls to sell toys, chow mein, golgappas, and other items. Some of the children were even begging for alms during the fair. One such child, while talking to the journalist, introduced himself as Rohan (a fictitious



name) and shared, "I am 14 years old, and I work at the

fair selling toys. I feel happy helping my parents with this

work." When the reporter asked him how he felt about doing this work and what he wanted to become when he grew up, Rohan replied, "I enjoy helping my parents because they are not wealthy enough to meet all our needs. By assisting them, we can fulfill some of our dreams, and it eases their burden of responsibilities." Regarding his aspirations, Rohan said, "I want to become a doctor so I can treat my family and people in need at a minimal cost. Many

poor individuals in our community struggle to afford good medical treatment due to their financial situations. Therefore, I aim to help them when I grow up by providing affordable medical care."

Many people living in slum areas are often unwell, facing various health issues. Rohan's dream of becoming a doctor reflects not just his personal ambition but also a deep desire to contribute to the well-being of his community and assist those who cannot access quality healthcare.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN LEARN THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER'S DAY

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Damini

We all know that teachers play a crucial role in shaping their students' futures. From kindergarten to university, they are the ones who provide education and introduce us to essential knowledge. Besides this, they also teach children moral values and instill these values within us. In this context, Teacher's Day is celebrated every year on September 5 to appreciate and honor the role of teachers in society. On this day, students express their gratitude and appreciation for their

teachers. Schools and colleges organize various programs, such as speeches, essay writing, and cultural presentations, in which both teachers and students participate. This year, working and street children at alternative education centers celebrated Teacher's Day with great joy alongside the principals and class teachers from government schools. The teachers engaged the children in poetry, storytelling, games, and other fun activities. A 13-year-old girl named Damini shared, "On Teacher's Day, we invited our class teacher to our Chetna



organisation's education centre, presented her with crafts made by the children, and cut a cake." She added,

"Our teacher also organised a fun activity with balloons for everyone." Fourteen-year-old Deepak expressed, "I want to become a Physical Education teacher when I grow up." He mentioned, "This was the first time I role-played as a PT teacher on Teacher's Day, and I learned that becoming a teacher requires a lot of hard work." Thirteen-year-old Poonam shared, "It was the first time our school's principal came to celebrate Teacher's Day at our center, and he encouraged all of us to come to school regularly and pursue quality education. We felt very good about that."



WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN TO US?

Balaknama Reporter - Shambhu

Let us try to understand how children who collect garbage and scrap live their daily lives and what difficulties they face before they can earn a few coins. In conversation with a reporter, it was revealed that these children collect scrap around railway stations and parks—areas frequented by the public, such as bus stands and railway stations. They gather items like plastic bottles, cans, and plastic glasses. The reporter noted that the children face significant challenges while working. For instance, when they board trains to collect scrap, ticket collectors (TTEs) and police often ask them to leave the station. Unfortunately, if these children do not work, how will their families manage their expenses? It has been reported that sometimes police even resort to physical violence against these children. Additionally, in the parks, some youths sit with their friends and engage in inappropriate activities. When these children pass by, they are subjected to verbal abuse, which creates

further distress for them. The children express that finding scrap has become increasingly difficult. They say, "If we do not work, how will we eat?" In an attempt to escape this hardship, the children tried collecting cardboard near grocery stores in their neighborhoods, but faced numerous challenges there as well. It was reported that some wicked individuals in the area set dogs on them, putting their lives at risk as they flee. The children say, "This is our compulsion; if we do not work, our parents may force us to beg like before, and they might even prohibit us from going to school." Before their enrollment in government schools through the social organization Chetna, they used to beg around bus stops and gurdwaras. However, since their admission, there has been a notable change in their parents, who now only make them collect scrap. Thus, they hope that they will not be subjected to such circumstances and that they will be allowed to collect scrap safely so they can pursue education and secure a better future.

CHILD SHEPHERD LEFT DEPRIVED OF EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal
Talkative Reporter: Shyam

Balaknama reporter Kajal visited the Mangyawas settlement in Jaipur, where she spotted a young boy herding goats. Curious, she approached him and asked, "Aren't you going to school? Do you come alone to herd the goats, or does someone from your family accompany you?" The 12-year-old boy, Ghanshyam (name changed), replied, "My parents collect scrap for a living. When we moved from the village, we brought five goats with us, thinking we could earn some money by selling their milk. But my parents couldn't find any good work here, so they started collecting scrap. They leave home early in the morning and return by evening, so it's my responsibility to take



care of the goats. To save on their food expenses, I come out alone every morning to herd them. When we lived in the village, I used to go to school. However, since my parents earn less here, I help by herding the goats so that any money we make from selling the milk can help at home. If I go to school, who will take care of the goats?"

The boy expressed his sadness when he recounted an incident from a few days ago. "While I was herding the goats, one of them wandered onto the road, and a car came speeding and hit her. She died on the spot, and the driver didn't even stop to check; he just drove away. This loss means we are now at a loss of about 5,000 rupees."

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FLYOVER TOOK AWAY THE ROOF FROM THE CHILDREN'S HEADS, MANY FAMILIES BECAME HOMELESS

Reporter Kishan

As the journalists of Balaknama visit every area of many states and bring to you the problems of street and working children, when the journalists reached the slums of South Delhi to visit, they saw that everything had been destroyed there. Although even before this visit, the journalists had visited that place many times and the journalists had found that about 700 to 800 huts were present at that place a few months ago. But when they visited this time, all the huts had been demolished and during the second visit, only a few people and a few children were present at that place. Then the journalists talked to 16-year-old girl Bela (name changed) at that place and tried to know where all these huts had gone? So the girl told that, we also live in this place. A river flows next to our slums and a flyover



is being constructed over the huts. Some flyovers have been built and work is still going on on some. All the people living in slums at this place used to do different kinds of work. Like selling toys, working in factories, working on different types of carts, working as scrap dealers etc. The authority demolished the slums of all the people and all of them reached different places. Like some

people had connections with their relatives, so they went there and some people reached rented rooms in the nearby village. Now only those people are staying at this place whose junk goods are kept. And we are also present here till our junk goods are sold. The authority officials have also asked us to move from here and in this way we will also sell our junk goods and go to some other place.

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IMPROPER SHELTER AND INDECENT ACTS EVEN IN NIGHT SHELTERS

Balaknama Reporter - Shambhu

Let us talk about the daily lives of working children who live on the streets. About two to three years ago, the families of these children used to survive under flyovers and on the pavements. Gradually, changes occurred, as they faced numerous difficulties living in those locations. For instance, the police often harassed them, and they were also vulnerable to harsh weather conditions, including rain. Sometimes, their belongings were even taken away, prompting the

decision to shift them to night shelters where they could be safe. However, when we spoke with the parents and children residing in these shelters, the children expressed their concerns, stating that they faced various issues even within the night shelters. The number of people inside these shelters is so high that it becomes excessively hot, despite the presence of multiple fans, which do little to alleviate the discomfort. Furthermore, the children reported that there are no facilities available; although there are beds in the



shelters, people sleep on them without any proper bedding. Sadly, there are individuals nearby who openly engage in inappropriate behavior,

adversely affecting the children. No concrete steps have been taken to address this issue thus far. Consequently, the children are severely

impacted, particularly as they enter adolescence. They tend to mimic the behaviors they observe, leading some boys to attempt inappropriate conversations with girls. The children expressed that these night shelters only provide protection from rain and sunlight, but do not offer any real benefits. Therefore, we advocate for the creation of small rooms for each family within the night shelters. This would help ensure that any inappropriate behavior occurs within a confined space, thus minimizing its negative impact on the children.

BADHTE KADAM FEDERATION SAVED A CHILD'S LIFE

Local Reporter: Mokshina

This incident took place in Gurguram's Ghata village, where a girl named Lakshmi, a member of the Badhte Kadam Federation, was going to the store to fetch some household items one evening. Suddenly, she noticed a little girl crying loudly, looking very distressed and sad, surrounded by a crowd. Since Lakshmi is a member of the federation and has learned how to help such children through meetings, she wasted no time and immediately went to talk to the girl. However, the child was very frightened and overwhelmed by the crowd, so she couldn't say anything. But Lakshmi reassured her and continued to converse with her. Eventually, the girl was only able to share her parents'

names. Lakshmi thought that if help wasn't provided to this child, something terrible could happen to her. She might be exploited, or a wrong person could lure her away. Because Lakshmi frequently hears on TV and in the news about the wrongs done to children, she decided to seek help by calling the emergency number 112 that she had remembered from the federation meetings. She called from her home phone, explained the entire situation in detail, and requested them to come as soon as possible to prevent anything wrong from happening to the child. As we know, innocent children easily fall prey to criminals. While waiting for the police to arrive, Lakshmi stayed with the little girl and provided her with reassurance. When the police arrived, Lakshmi,



along with the girl and some nearby people, went to the police station so that the child wouldn't be scared. On the way, Lakshmi continued to console her, while the police got to work, notifying

various locations via phone and wireless communication about the missing girl. Soon, the efforts of the police and Lakshmi paid off, and they found the girl's parents. Seeing her parents, the little girl began to cry with joy, and her parents were overjoyed to have her back. On this occasion, the police gave the child and her parents essential advice, emphasizing how serious their carelessness could have been. It was only due to Lakshmi's quick thinking and understanding that they received timely information and the girl was not harmed. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to find her. The girl's parents expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Lakshmi, stating that they could never repay her for this favor. The police officers

present praised Lakshmi and encouraged her for her actions, asking her how she came to know about all these numbers. Lakshmi proudly replied that she learned all of this from the Growing Steps meetings. She mentioned that whenever she attends these meetings, they are provided with helpline numbers, which she has memorized. Afterward, Lakshmi returned home, where everyone in the neighborhood praised her for safely bringing a child back home. Lakshmi said she could do all this because of federation, which helped her remember the police numbers. She also credited the Chetna organization, acknowledging their significant contribution in enabling them to connect with the police, making them feel like friends.

IMPROPER SHELTER AND INDECENT ACTS EVEN IN NIGHT SHELTERS

Balaknama Reporter - Shambhu

Rain Complicates Life for Street Children on Footpaths. The relentless rain has made life extremely difficult for street and working children living on footpaths in Delhi and Noida. As we all know, the weather patterns have been changing unpredictably. Rainfall occurs sporadically, sometimes during the day and sometimes at night, causing numerous problems for children and their families living on the streets. When our Balaknama reporters met these children to discuss their situation, they found that the

challenges were particularly severe for children living in Noida. These children live entirely under the open sky, making them constant victims of the harsh weather conditions. Expressing their plight, the children shared that there isn't even a night shelter where they can stay with their families. Twelve-year-old Asma (name changed) said that most of the children work to earn a living, and only then can their families survive. With the money they earn, they buy food and other essentials. However, due to the rain, their food supplies have been spoiled, forcing



them to go hungry. Asma also mentioned that there are very young children here, aged 3 to 4 years. To protect these little ones from the rain, their parents use tarpaulins, but

even with that, the children often get wet, leading to colds, coughs, and fevers. As a result, these children trouble their parents, crying the entire day. The children further

explained that the scrap they collect is usually from markets and railway stations. Due to the rain, all the scrap gets soaked, and when the weather improves slightly, they try to dry it out. But often, the police come and ask them to remove everything, accusing them of creating a mess. Sometimes, the police even kick the scrap away, throwing it out. The children expressed their desire for relief from this suffering and asked the government to provide some form of shelter or system to protect them from such hardships, enabling them to live a safe and secure life.

CHILDREN PLAYING DRUMS AT WEDDINGS AND FESTIVALS

Talkative Reporter: Rahul,
Reporter: Kishan

During their visit to the slums near Noida Sector 76, Balaknama reporters observed several children engaged in various activities. They came across a group of children playing drums, where some older kids were teaching the younger ones how to play. The reporters spoke to 14-year-old Ramesh (name changed), who shared, "In our neighborhoods, there are older brothers who play drums at weddings, birthday parties,

Navratri, Chhath Puja, and Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations. Most people know that there are children and adults who play drums in this slum, so they book us in advance for weddings, festivals, and other events." Ramesh explained that the payment for playing drums varies depending on the duration of the performance. "Sometimes, even after agreeing on a specific time, they ask us to play longer. At weddings, many guests drink alcohol and sometimes behave rudely while we play. In such cases, we have to stop playing,



and the owner may not pay us the full amount we agreed upon. However, there's a bit

of joy in the fact that when people dance at weddings, they often give us tips. When

we receive a little extra in tips, it compensates for our hard work." He continued, "When there are no bookings for drum performances, the older brothers teach the children to play drums in the open areas of the slum. The drum consists of two parts: the nasik and the tasha, which creates most of the sound. The older brothers teach us different styles of drumming, and while we practice, many kids from the neighborhood come to dance. It's really fun to see that, and whenever we get more bookings, we go out to play drums at different events."

HALF-NAKED BANDAGED CHILDREN BEGGING FOR SURVIVAL



Balaknama Reporter - Shambhu

Today, we bring to light the struggles of some children you may not be aware of. During a visit to a location, a Balaknama reporter discovered a group of children, most of whom wear barely any clothes. These children beg wearing only half pants. But why do they do this? Here's the reason. Nowadays, some people have stopped giving money to child beggars

and instead offer them food or drinks. This has upset many parents because these children are their primary source of income. The Balaknama reporter shared that these children intentionally wear minimal clothing so that people feel pity for them and give them money rather than food items. Many of these children even bandage parts of their bodies to make it appear as though they are injured,

hoping people will give them money instead of food out of sympathy. However, this practice subjects the children to various hardships. Eight-year-old Rahul (name changed) explained that during the rainy season, the lack of clothing leaves them shivering in the cold. Sometimes, they get drenched in the rain, leading to colds and fevers. When they tell their parents about their discomfort, the parents often ignore their complaints. These children are left wondering how to escape such conditions. Many of them want to go to school, but they lack the necessary documents. They've heard that birth certificates are now required for admission to government schools, but they don't have them. They are seeking help to free themselves from these struggles and find a way to a better future.



TERROR OF STRAY DOGS IN THE SLUM, CHILDREN LIVING IN FEAR

Talkative Reporter: Aarti
Reporter: Kishan

Nowadays, wherever you look on the streets, you will find stray animals everywhere. However, if we talk specifically about the lanes and neighborhoods, the number of stray dogs is notably high. During a visit to a slum in Noida, a 9-year-old girl named Kayal shared her experience, stating that the slum where they live is quite large and has a significant number of stray dogs. In every lane of their slum, you can easily spot at least five or more dogs. It is also worth mentioning that there are more female dogs than male dogs in these streets. These animals give birth every six months, and they don't just have one puppy at a time; they usually produce six or more puppies in a single litter, and as they grow, their numbers continue to increase. The growing population of stray dogs has created a problem: the children in the slum are afraid to go out into the streets and lanes. Whenever they need

to step outside for household chores, they worry about the roaming dogs and whether they might get bitten. When the children are on their way to school or for other tasks, there are some aggressive dogs that sense their presence and may bite them without any provocation. In fact, on average, wild dogs bite children in the slum every three to four days. As a result, the children are instilled with a fear that if they step outside their homes, the dogs will attack them.

Throughout the day, these dogs bark at each other, and their noise reverberates through the slum, making it even more daunting for anyone to venture outside. Although vehicles occasionally come to capture these dogs, this happens only when someone from the slum files a complaint.

If there are no complaints, no action is taken. Moreover, when the vehicle does arrive to capture the dogs, the ones left behind often bark for days, and in their distress, they become even more aggressive.

INNOCENT FORCED TO SELL MAGGI NOODLES AND PASTA

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Rahul

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited various slums in Jaipur. During his visit to Kali Ka Bhatta slum, he noticed a 9-year-old boy named Rais (name changed) sitting at a small, empty wooden shop. He had a pot of noodles with him, which initially seemed like he had kept them for himself. However, soon children from the nearby area started coming to him, and Rais began selling them noodles in small pieces of newspaper for 2, 5, and 10 rupees. The reporter spoke to Rais and asked why he was doing this work, how much money he earned in a day, and why he wasn't attending school. Rais explained that he earns 30 to 40 rupees a day and that he does this work at his mother's request. He further explained that he



doesn't have an Aadhaar card, which is why he hasn't been able to get admitted to school. His mother believes that instead of sitting idle at home, it's better if he works and contributes to the household income. So, she prepares Maggi noodles or sometimes pasta for him in the morning and asks him to sit at the shop. Rais said he sells the prepared Maggi to the children in the

slum and gives the money he earns to his mother for household expenses. It is unfortunate that instead of receiving opportunities to play, learn, and study, children like Rais are being pushed into child labor due to the lack of documents and economic hardship, with parents themselves inadvertently destroying their children's childhood.

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

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

Child line Number
1098
Police Helpline Number
100

PRADEEP SAVES MANY LIVES BY PROMPTLY ALERTING EMERGENCY SERVICES

Talkative Reporter: Pradeep

Children living in the Zakhira community of Delhi have no place to play, as railway tracks line both sides of their neighborhood. They often make do with a small mound of dirt in front of the toilet, where they play and remain cheerful. On the day of Janmashtami, Pradeep recounted an incident that occurred while they were playing on that makeshift hill. He noticed a passenger bus in the distance, where multiple vehicles were moving back and forth. Suddenly, the bus halted on an overpass, and its engine began to overheat. The driver instructed all passengers to exit the bus. As the passengers were getting off, a fire broke out inside the bus. The children from the Zakhira community, while playing, saw the flames and started shouting that the bus was on fire. Pradeep observed that three children and a driver were trapped inside the bus without any help. He shouted for assistance, saying, "There are three kids and a man stuck in the bus; someone help them!" However, the other children, frightened by the fire, scattered and sought help from the adults. In that critical moment, Pradeep wisely decided to use the



helpline number. He ran home to get a phone and called for an ambulance, explaining the situation at the Zakhira community. He reported that the bus had caught fire, that all passengers had evacuated, but three children and an uncle remained trapped inside. A female employee on the other end of the helpline asked for the location and details of the overpass where the fire was occurring. The children accurately described the route to the emergency services, and within 10 to 15 minutes, the fire brigade and ambulance arrived at the Zakhira community overpass. They assisted the children and the driver trapped in the burning bus. The fire brigade extinguished the flames, while the ambulance staff helped the injured victims out of the bus. However, when

the doctor and the ward boy from the ambulance removed the trapped children and the driver, Pradeep observed that the children's skin was severely burned, and the driver's clothes had caught fire, leaving his skin badly charred. All four individuals were in critical condition. The fire brigade worked to put out the fire, while the ambulance provided immediate first aid before transporting them to the hospital. Pradeep's ability to help arose from his awareness of his rights and emergency helpline numbers, gained through his education at the Chetna Organization. He expressed gratitude to Chetna for teaching him about these resources, stating, "Thanks to Chetna, I was aware of the helplines and my rights, which enabled me to save four lives."

HOOKAH SMOKING: CHILDREN DRAWN INTO ADDICTION

Talkative Reporter: Om Prakash, Reporter: Rajkishore

During his community visits, Baatuni reporter Rajkishore witnessed something that left him in disbelief. While touring the slums of Nathupur in Gurugram, he saw several children smoking hookah, puffing out smoke into the air with an air of sophistication. This alarming sight shocked and disturbed him, prompting him to approach the children for a conversation. When he asked them why they were smoking hookah, the children responded, "We find it very attractive. It looks cool, and when we see adults exhaling smoke, we want to do it too. It feels different and refreshing when we smoke." Curious about how they developed this habit, Rajkishore pressed further. The children explained, "It looks so appealing and impressive that we just want to try it. It's fun to exhale the smoke." Rajkishore cautioned them, "But this is



very dangerous! It can lead to diseases and harm your health. The smoke is harmful and can hurt you. You shouldn't smoke it; instead, you should stay away from it. You're just kids, and you might not understand the consequences yet. We should avoid addictive substances because if we don't, we might become dependent on them in the future. Smoking weakens our bodies and wastes our money." He urged the children to refrain from smoking hookah and to stay away from such hazardous substances.

INCIDENTS OF HARASSMENT OF GIRLS BATHING IN PUBLIC

Bureau Report

You must have heard from people some time or the other that one's own thing is one's own, that is, there is a huge difference between one's own thing and someone else's thing. Similarly, there is a huge difference between living on rent at someone else's place and living in one's own house. We are talking about those children who live with their families in slums. When girls in slums have to face one or more problems, how do they face them? When Balaknama journalists reached a slum in Noida and saw that there was no facility like toilet for bathing in that slum, then when they talked to 14-year-old girl Sulochana (name changed) of the slum, the girl said that we live in this place and there are about 40 to 45 slums located in this place, and most of the people living in the slum are working people. The biggest problem in this colony is that there is a big water tank located here, it is very big and wide. When most of the girls

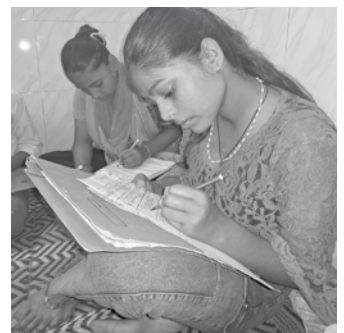


of the colony go to bathe in it, there is no closed hut or closed room facility near the tank where we girls can bathe properly, but when we girls are bathing or washing household utensils and clothes etc., some stray boys of the colony come and sit at a distance from us and entertain themselves by looking at us and make various gestures. Then feeling embarrassed, we have to stop looking at them and while bathing when we are changing clothes, we have to face many other problems. The elder members of our family like parents, elder brothers etc. go

to their respective work, so these people take advantage of this and we children are left small, due to which we are unable to do anything. Once there is an incident when a woman from Basti was taking bath, an elderly person took a video and photo of her on his mobile and that person shared it on Instagram. Then after a few days, when the woman's husband came to know about it, there was a lot of uproar and a fight on this matter. The contractor of Basti has also been told about this many times but he also avoids it like this.

Balaknama Reporter - Hans Kumar

The editorial meeting of the Balaknama newspaper for September was held on September 13, 2024, at the ERC Center in Keshavpuram. Typically, this meeting takes place at the headquarters of Chetna Organization in Gautam Nagar, but due to changing circumstances, it was conducted at the ERC this time. The meeting was attended by Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar, editor Kishan, and fifteen children who are leaders from their respective centers. The meeting began with introductions, followed by discussions about the objectives and significance of the editorial meeting. Balaknama reporter Kishan explained the importance of the meeting and what activities take place during it. Participants shared information about Balaknama, "Badte Kadam," receipts for "Badte Kadam," and helpline numbers, including the Childline helpline number and its uses. They also discussed the contact numbers for the police and fire brigade. The discussion included how to collect and share news, and participants talked about various issues



faced by children in their areas. They shared their experiences and discussed how to address these issues. Following the discussions, a game was played, and a snack was enjoyed by everyone. In conclusion, Kishan conducted a test for the children, marking the end of the meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to empower children with knowledge and skills to contribute to the Balaknama newspaper and raise awareness about their rights and responsibilities. The children learned about the importance of teamwork, communication, and leadership, and they had the opportunity to share their thoughts, which will be featured in the upcoming issue of Balaknama. The next editorial meeting is scheduled for Oct 2024, where the children will discuss their articles and stories for the next issue of Balaknama.

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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