

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.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR STREET CHILDREN (APRIL 12TH) APPROACHES, STREET CHILDREN EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE SIGNIFICANT OCCASION

Reporters: Hansraj, Raj Kishor,
Kajal, Kishan

You must be aware of what happens every year on April 12th, right? Yes, every year on April 12th, organizations worldwide celebrate International Day for Street Children, shedding light on the lives of children living and working on the streets and engaging in various activities. You may have observed children working in your neighborhoods, markets, and streets, undertaking various tasks such as scavenging, begging, selling ballons, household chores, and various other odd jobs to earn a living. Reporters from Balaknama visited different states to learn about the challenges faced by street-working children and the reasons behind their work. In Noida, Delhi, Jaipur, Haryana, and Lucknow, they discussed the issues encountered by these children during their work. A 9-year-old girl named Rakhi (name

changed) living in Jaipur shared her story. She currently lives with her parents and often accompanies her mother to beg for alms and takes care of her younger siblings. Due to responsibilities from a young age, she never had the chance to attend school, and her family never encouraged her to do so. Despite her desire for education, she couldn't pursue it due to familial responsibilities. When workers from Chetna organization visited her locality, she was thrilled to learn that they educate children. Consequently, she started attending classes regularly, and with the help of Chetna, she's now enrolled in fourth grade. This doesn't mean she's stopped working entirely, but she now sells brooms in her neighborhood instead of begging. She share that I urge you all to understand that while work is essential, so is education. Children working on the streets often lack access to information beyond



their work. Let's support them in balancing work with education." When reporters of the Balaknama spoke to Sakshi, a 13-year-old girl residing in Delhi, she revealed that she currently engages in scrap work in the slums of Delhi with her parents. When asked about the celebration of Street Children's Day on April 12th, Sakshi expressed her lack of awareness beyond their daily toil. She stated that they remain engrossed in their work

throughout the day, unaware of the passage of time. When reporters informed her about this day, she elucidated the challenges they face while engaging in scrap work, such as collecting scrap from door to door, encountering various types of waste including broken glass, which they pick with their hands, often resulting in injuries. They endure such hardships daily. Children engaged in such labor struggle with various difficulties. Shivani, another

girl working in Gurugram, disclosed that they sell toys on the streets. Children venture out for work when their homes are plagued with multiple problems. While selling toys, they witness other children selling addictive substances. There was a 16-year-old boy who was disinterested in education, hence resorted to scrap work. Due to insufficient earnings, he turned to selling addictive substances on the streets. Moreover, when they engage in such activities, the police get informed, leading to chaos, and they have to flee as the police don't allow them to work on the streets. Hence, they grapple with these troubles. In Noida, information was also gathered from street and working children on this matter. In Sector 62 of Noida, Jishant (changed name) shared that he currently resides in a slum settlement in Sector 62 with his mother. Presently, he is grappling with several

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IN MAKESHIFT SETTLEMENTS NEAR SEWAGE LINES, CHILDREN OFTEN FEEL INSECURE

Bureau Report

In challenging circumstances, there is often a reluctance to assist. Children in the bastions of Sector 49 in Noida reside in places where uncertainty prevails. When journalists approached children residing in these settlements, they recounted a startling aspect of their habitat. These settlements, housing approximately 150 households, are constructed along sewage lines, making it unpredictable when or what problem might arise. Consequently, the residents of these settlements are constantly under threat. Besides, there is a large drain adjacent to the houses. First, let us narrate an incident

from this settlement, which the children recounted with profound sorrow, dating back a few months. During the rainy season, the risk of collapse looms over all the houses in the area. Sewage lines often rupture, causing water to leak inside, posing a danger of collapse. Sometimes, due to heavy rainfall, water seeps underground and reaches above the civil lines, causing sealing inside the houses, further increasing the risk of collapse. One night around 11:00 PM, during heavy rainfall, an individual, under the influence of alcohol, was returning home from work. While climbing the stairs to his house, he slipped and fell into a nearby pothole. The



house adjacent to where he fell had collapsed earlier due to a ruptured sewage line, and his house was also situated near the same pothole. As soon as he fell, rainwater filled the pothole, and there was a large pipe connected to the drain nearby. He got trapped in the pipe, which led directly to the

drain. Adjacent to the drain was an elderly woman's house who couldn't speak as she was deaf. She noticed the man and tried to alert people passing by, but nobody understood her gestures. Eventually, some people reached the edge of the drain but failed to locate him due to the darkness. The next

day, when it became known that the man hadn't returned home all night, panic spread among the residents. Their fears were confirmed when a commotion erupted, and the elderly woman tried to signal to people, who then initiated a search in the drain. They found the man trapped where he had fallen, and he was sent for postmortem. Children, while recounting these incidents with great sadness, expressed their concern that such accidents could happen to anyone in the settlement at any time, whether falling into the drain or having their homes collapse into it, yet the village head takes no action. Every day, children are haunted by the fear of experiencing such an incident themselves.

ALCOHOL DELIVERIES FROM MINORS ARE OCCURRING IN MULTIPLE AREAS OF WEST DELHI

Local Reporter-Ehtaramil,
Balaknama reporter-Hans
Kumar

In nearly every alley and neighbourhood of West Delhi's slums, the sale of intoxicants is rampant. Minor children are involved in the narcotics trade, where they often serve as guides to lead customers to the sellers and negotiate prices. These children have become adept at identifying potential buyers, distinguishing whether they are coming to purchase narcotics or for other purposes. When they suspect someone might be a police officer, they immediately alert their handlers. This narcotics

trade brings substances from Haryana and neighbouring states to the border areas of Delhi. A case came to light when during a visit to Valmiki Camp in West Delhi, reporter Hans Kumar was informed by local reporter Ehtaramil that a boy named Vipin (name changed) works for a family of bootleggers engaged in the illegal alcohol trade. His job involves supplying alcohol to customers. The main reason minors like him are employed is due to their young age, which often avoids police scrutiny. Vipin explained that he is compelled to engage in this work because despite both his parents being labourers,

they struggle to make ends meet. He revealed that illegal alcohol, marijuana, and other narcotics are sold openly in Valmiki Camp and surrounding areas. Simply asking anyone at the nearby bus stand about narcotics yields results. Locals claim that besides alcohol, small shops also sell marijuana and other intoxicants. Children purchase and sell drugs. This not only affects children but also poses challenges for women and girls in the area. Children who should be attending school are instead involved in selling alcohol. This happens either because parents fail to properly care for their children or due to

dire circumstances. Vipin disclosed that he receives a commission per bottle for delivering alcohol from the bootlegger family to customers. He earns about two hundred rupees daily, supporting his family financially and managing his meals. Some neighbours have tried to inform Vipin's parents about his involvement in this trade, urging them to prevent him from getting involved, but their pleas fell on deaf ears. Vipin does not attend school; he solely focuses on supplying alcohol to customers or playing marbles during his free time, which darkens his prospects continuously.



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR STREET CHILDREN (APRIL 12TH) APPROACHES, STREET CHILDREN EXPRESS THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE SIGNIFICANT OCCASION

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issues; his father has passed away, and his death was a result of murder. This has brought numerous troubles upon him. When his father was alive, he used to attend school daily, while both his parents managed a shop. Upon returning from school, he used to assist them. Even at that time, his mother's health remained poor, and now, in the present, his mother's health still remains frail. However, now he has dropped out of school, and he is busy running the shop. Running the shop entails facing many problems. Separate bribes have to be given to the police, amounting to ₹3000 per month, and to the authorities. If either of them is not given, they harass. Not only that, they suddenly drop the goods from the cart or break the goods and take them away after filling them up. Those who do not pay bribes face the most abuse. Near the main landmark in Noida, there are also many children doing various jobs. Child Vishnu (changed name) said that as you know, due to being poor, one has to struggle with many problems, and money cannot be arranged for medicines, so loans have to be taken for other tasks as well. There is a girl here who is 17 years old and she goes to work in the houses to clean and wash utensils and clothes because her father had taken a loan to build a house and now that loan is increasing, so the girl has to work. She earns ₹9000 per month and goes to houses for household chores. You know, everyone takes advantage of helplessness. Children doing various jobs are seen everywhere. Some people are also there who take undue advantage of children and make them work more for less money. An attempt was also made to

know from the children during the discussion on this subject that as children are increasingly involved in work day by day, what should be done so that they do not engage too much in work? Children from different places shared their thoughts. The girl residing in Noida emphasized the necessity of hard work to achieve something. However, everyone tends to exploit children, assuming them to be naive. Hence, along with chores, children should also acquire knowledge and other information. A girl from Gurugram revealed that children engage in various tasks at different places, and it's not only the police or authorities who take bribes from them, but even villagers and government officials do. However, when children think of complaining, they get stuck because they fear losing their jobs at that place. Therefore, we urge that whoever is caught taking bribes should be suspended or given strict punishment. Child laborers in Jaipur mentioned that children work in various places across many states. Some of them could also receive education alongside work, but they don't want to despite their desire. Hence, we appeal to all parents to be vigilant and send their children to school for education. Soni (changed name), living in Lucknow, explained that most children from poor households and cannot reach school due to poverty, thus getting stuck in some problem or the other. People living in big buildings are dependent on large households. If even they lend a helping hand to one child, it could benefit many children, enabling them to access education. Consequently, they too can live their dreams and childhood to the fullest.

CHILDREN LIVING AMID FILTH AND FOUL ODORS FACE SEVERE CHALLENGES

Local Reporter-Moksina,
Balaknama reporter-Rajkishor

Today, we are going to shed light on a reality that is adversely affecting the lives of thousands of children and deteriorating their health. Families of children working on the streets, who are economically very weak, often rent very cheap shanties where problems of filth, mud, and waterlogging are common. Piles of garbage are often found in such areas as people dispose of waste around, leading to foul smells, flies, mosquitoes, and the constant fear of diseases spreading. This foul odour makes breathing difficult and eating a challenging task, severely impacting the health of children. When our reporter Rajkishor visited Ghata village, a local reporter there highlighted their issue. During the conversation, reporters revealed that for the past few days, some people have been coming from



outside and dumping garbage and scrap metal around our shanties using tractor-trailers, and they do this not just once but every day, making our lives extremely difficult and causing us significant losses. When garbage is thrown around us, the foul smell emitted harms our bodies, making it difficult to breathe, and we struggle to breathe in air. When rubbish is strewn

around, we find it extremely difficult to breathe in the polluted environment, and when we see it, we cannot even eat, and children are suffering a lot from it. Not only children but also their parents and neighbours are significantly affected by it, showing adverse effects on their bodies such as fever, difficulty in breathing, dengue, etc., causing them a lot of trouble.

OLDER STUDENTS' DRUG ABUSE AND MISCONDUCT CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR YOUNGER ONES IN SCHOOL

Balaknama Reporter-Akash,
Local Reporter-Naitik

We all know that school is a temple of knowledge. It is also referred to as a second home for children, a safe place where students feel secure and are free to learn their favourite subjects and essential life skills. Recently, a shocking incident came to light in the context of a government school located about 2-3 kilometres away from Jayasinghpura Khor, a slum area in Jaipur. When Balaknama reporters Akash and Naitik spoke to

the children attending the school, they revealed that some mischievous boys from the higher classes (9-12) indulge in drug abuse, smoking cigarettes, and chewing tobacco in the bathrooms, empty rooms, or even on the rooftop. Sometimes, broken bottles of alcohol are also found in the bathrooms. If someone complains about them, they intimidate and threaten the complainant, sometimes resorting to physical violence. Although some teachers in the school administration are aware of

this issue, the mischievous children also misbehave with the teachers, which results in the teachers failing to discipline them. Consequently, there is no discipline among these mischievous children, making other children hesitant and fearful of going to the bathroom. Besides, there are already several problems faced by children going to school from the streets and working children, and this unsafe environment even after reaching school is hampering the interests and aspirations of these children.

GIRLS' EDUCATION IS HINDERED BY PARENTS' CONSERVATIVE MINDSET

Balaknama Reporter- Kajal,
Local Reporter-Sanku

Balaknama reporter Kajal visited various slum areas in Jaipur, and when she reached the Badarvas Basti, she found many girls playing near their shanties, while some were engaged in household chores. Reporter Kajal spoke to two girls named Tinku (changed name) and Karma (changed name) and asked them if they didn't go to school today. Tinku replied, "No girl from

this basti goes to school. Our parents only send boys to school." While the reporter was talking to Tinku and Karma, their fathers came out of their shanties and said, "We don't send our daughters out of the house because the times are bad, and it's our society's tradition that girls don't go out of the house." When the reporter asked their fathers if they would send their daughters to study if a centre for education was opened in the basti, the girls'



fathers said that if there were arrangements for education in the Basti, they would allow them to study there, but they would never send them to school. Educating girls ensures a safer life and builds stronger families, communities, and economies. While it's heartening to hear these things, even today, many girls in several slum areas of Jaipur are deprived of education due to the conservative mindset of their parents.

CHILDREN ARE RESORTING TO THEFT WITHIN THEIR OWN HOMES IN PURSUIT OF A BETTER LIFE

Bureau Report

It often happens that when the elders in the family, such as parents, siblings, etc., do not pay attention to their children, they engage in activities within the home that go unnoticed by the family members. In a village near Surajpur in Noida, a balaknama reporter met with children, and they found that these children attend school daily and even come to a mobile education van for studying. During the meeting, a 14-year-old girl narrated the story of a 10-year-old boy, which is a story you should hear and be cautious about. The girl described a boy named Ravi who lives in a neighboring lane with his family. He attends school daily in class three at a private school and lives with four family members, including two brothers and his parents. His father works as a security



guard, and his mother does household chores like cooking and dishwashing. His elder brother works in a factory. Ravi's father is the head of the household, and if anyone needs to go anywhere, they have to take his permission. Even if they need money, they have to ask him, and he keeps the money of his mother, elder brother, and himself in a place where only he knows. Since

Ravi is the youngest in the family, his parents love him a lot and overlook any mistakes he makes, ignoring them. A few days ago, he started going out with his 14-15-year-old friends daily, which his parents knew about. One day, when his father was keeping the household money in the same place he always did, Ravi saw him from behind. After his father left, he started taking

out money from that place a few days later. He would take out Rs. 500, 1000, or 2000 every day and spend it on other things with his friends, like eating pizza burgers at the mall and buying clothes, and after treating his friends with all these things, he would bring them home and also treat his mother, father, and elder brother. When asked where he got all these things

from, Ravi would say that his friends treat him, and their parents give them money, so he brings them home. The family thought he was telling the truth, but one day, Ravi's friend asked him for Rs. 2000, and Ravi gave it to him. After a few hours, the friend returned to Ravi's house and gave the money to Ravi's father. When asked why he was giving it, the friend said, "I'm Ravi's friend, and he gives me money every day by taking it from here. But I felt bad about it, so I'm returning it today. Please don't mention my name." Ravi's father said, "You've told us, that's enough. Don't worry." When Ravi returned home, his father asked him who his friend was, who gave him so much money every day. Ravi said, "He's my friend who gives me money. So, Ravi's father beat him and then explained to him. Currently, Ravi does not engage in such activities anymore.

AMID ADVERSITY, OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE CHANGE ARE ARISING FOR STREET CHILDREN

Local Reporter- Lakshmi,
Balaknama reporter Rajkishor

Today, we bring to you the stories of children whose tales you might have read in Balaknama earlier—stories of fires breaking out in slums, children taking up odd jobs to fill their stomachs, news of children resorting to theft, or some fleeing their homes. Through Balaknama, you've been presented with various issues affecting these children over time. Today, we are here to share the story of children who were formerly engaged in child labour, toiling on the streets to make ends meet. These

very children, after affiliating with the Chetna organization and taking progressive steps, discovered the importance of child rights and developed an inclination towards education. The organisation provided these children with proper guidance and emphasized the significance of school education. With the support and guidance of the foundation, these children are now embracing the promise of a brighter future.

One such child is Armaan (name changed), a 13-year-old boy who used to work in slums and on the streets, yearning for education but



unable to attend school due to various constraints. However, as he learned about the importance of education and its accessibility through the Chetna organization, he began his educational journey at the contact point established by the organization. Starting with basic education, he eventually secured admission to a formal school with the foundation's assistance. When reporters of Balaknama spoke with Armaan, he expressed his fondness for attending school but lamented the financial constraints at home hindering his ability to do so. Witnessing other children attending

school filled him with a desire to pursue education, but he harboured doubts about his dreams ever materializing. However, upon receiving free education from the Chetna organization, along with provisions for food and recreational activities, his spirits soared. The organization provided Armaan and many other marginalized children like him with the opportunity to access school education. Chetna organization's efforts are proving instrumental in assisting street and working children, paving the way for them to attend school and embrace a brighter future.

Poor drainage is causing continuous illness among children

Reporter Kishan

When children are working on the roads doing chores, there are often situations that cannot be ignored, implying that they have to work with many difficulties. While reporters were roaming the streets of the Nizamuddin area, they saw a 14-year-old boy working in a hotel. Balaknama reporters approached the boy to inquire if there was anything problematic for him there. The boy replied, "I work in this hotel, and I have no complaints against the owner. But there is something that remains unnoticed even though it is seen every day, and we have to deal with a lot of foul smell because of it." There is a drain 50 meters away from our



shop that is always filled, and although it is cleaned every week, it always gets filled again, perhaps because there is some problem inside it. On top of that drain, there is a flow of garbage, urine, and water, causing a lot of foul smell. Due to this drain, people don't even come near

our shop. Many times I have fallen sick due to this drain. Many people and children pass through this road, and most of the children come to school through this route in the morning. Seeing this drain, children feel bad, and there is a foul smell, causing people living nearby to fall ill. Many cleaning employees come, but they clean it and when they are told that the drain gets filled every two hours, what's the use of cleaning it? They don't say anything; they just say they will fix it soon and take photos but ultimately no action is taken. My only request is that this drain be fixed as soon as possible so that people can come to our shop and people living nearby and children can be saved from falling ill.



CHILD MARRIAGE TRADITION PROFOUNDLY AFFECTS CHILDHOOD, WITH SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS

Balaknama Reporter: Kajal,
Local Reporter: Rahim

In Rajasthan, we've often heard about various customs and traditions, each belonging to different lineages. However, one such tradition involves sacrificing animals only when children are married off. To delve deeper into this practice, when reporter Kajal visited the makeshift settlement of Lakhsera in Jaipur and discussed the tradition of child marriage with the children, local reporter Rahim explained that according to this tradition, when an elder passes away and upon the completion

of the 40-day mourning period, approximately 10 goats are sacrificed during a meal. However, these sacrifices must not go in vain, meaning they're only deemed acceptable when a boy or girl gets married. In this tradition, children are married off at a young age, depriving them of their childhood. Moreover, the child reporters also met children in the settlement who had already been married off due to the child marriage tradition, especially girls who are engrossed in household chores and have no knowledge of the outside world beyond the settlement.

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

Balaknama Reporter: Akash,
Local Reporter- Tohit

During a visit to JDA Basti, Jaipur, balaknama reporter Akash observed some children carrying water in utensils on the way. Upon inquiring, Mohit (changed name) explained that the water pipe outside the settlement had broken, and for the past five days, there has been no water supply in our homes, causing significant difficulties in daily chores. Any social issue in filthy settlements inevitably affects children; they must go far to fetch water, facing risks of crossing roads, fear of secluded areas, and the burden of carrying loads. Consequently, children who should be attending school are unable to do so because their



priority is fulfilling their basic needs. Additionally, the Municipal Corporation has placed a small water tank between the market and the settlement, about 500 meters away. However, its condition is deteriorated, much like the rest of the city's

settlements. The tank is in poor condition externally, and the water inside is also contaminated. Although we hope our problem will be resolved soon, we wonder when the administration will become active in addressing these issues.



WATER ACCUMULATION ON ROADS IS CAUSING ILLNESSES AND SPREADING INFECTIONS AMONG CHILDREN

Local Reporter -Ajay, with
contributions from journalist
Sarita

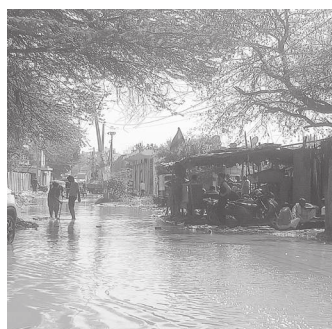
During a visit to the Ghosola Contact Point in Gurugram by our field journalist Sarita, a child residing in the slum shared his ordeal. Identified as Ajay (name changed), a 10-year-old hailing from Bengal, Ajay revealed that he has been living in Ghosola village for approximately 5-6 years. His father works as a guard, while his mother undertakes the task of cleaning other households. Ajay narrated the challenges they face due to the recurring waterlogging outside their shanty. He described how the situation poses difficulties for them to attend school and their NGO center for education. Additionally, he expressed concern over the numerous

illnesses afflicting the residents of their slum due to the stagnant water. Ajay mentioned the outbreak of chickenpox within their community, which necessitated extreme caution to prevent its further spread. The excess water not only leads to health hazards but also disrupts their educational pursuits. He recounted how several children, including those attending their center, fell ill due to the prevailing conditions. Despite the recovery of some children, a few continue to struggle with their health. He emphasized the need for isolating the affected children to prevent the spread of the disease, likening it to the rapid transmission of the coronavirus. He concluded by highlighting the considerable challenges they face in attending school and the center due to water accumulation.

CHILDREN EXPRESS CONCERNS OVER CONTINUOUS WATER LOGGING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Local Reporter-Chandni,
Balaknama Reporter Sarita.

In a recent visit to the Goga Colony Village in Haryana (Gurugram) by reporter Sarita, it was observed that children in the community are troubled by the persisting issue of waterlogging in their area. During interactions with the local children on the streets and in their daily activities, they expressed their distress over the excessive water accumulation in their lanes. They explained that this accumulation poses a significant inconvenience for them to attend their educational center, and the water is so contaminated that anyone walking through it risks falling ill, leading to



frequent illnesses among the residents. The primary cause of this waterlogging is attributed to the practice of homeowners indiscriminately opening the pipes of their tanks and gutters, allowing the water to flow into the lanes, resulting in severe contamination. Consequently, residents are compelled to navigate

through this unhygienic environment, leading to frequent illnesses among the children. When our journalists conversed with Chandni, a resident of the area, about the challenges she faces and her commitment to attending classes despite them, she expressed her passion for education and her aspiration to become a teacher in the future. She asserted her determination to confront every obstacle openly and without fear, regardless of the circumstances. Chandni's determination to pursue education despite adversities brought immense joy to our team, reflecting her profound dedication to learning despite her tender age.

STREET AND LABOURERS ' CHILDREN BEG FOR FOOD IN MARKETS TO EASE HUNGER

Reporter: Kishan

The hunger pangs are perilous, hence resorting to begging becomes necessary. Yes, we are discussing children from the Lajpat Nagar Market in Delhi, who caught the attention of reporters while wandering around the market, soliciting food from passersby, a 10-year-old boy, and when the journalists approached him, he shared his story and explained the reason behind begging for food in the market. He said, "I live with my parents in the makeshift settlements around Lajpat Nagar Market. I go to school every morning, currently studying in class three. Our

household situation is not stable, which compels us to come to the market for work. In this market, my parents, elder sister, and others engage in various activities."

"I go to school first thing in the morning and then, after returning from school, I immediately pick up my toys to sell in the market. My father buys toys and other items from the market, which I sell. Items such as toy tractors, utensils, dolls, etc., have different prices, and we carry them in our hands, constantly roaming and shouting to attract customers. People who want toys call us, but we carry our merchandise because we're not allowed to sit in one



place. When the police arrive at the market, we have to run away, fearing they might seize our goods. Hence, we have to sell by roaming around. When we return from school,

my mother is already in the market working. Sometimes, we can't have meals at home because of this. On days when my mother cooks, we eat quickly after returning from school and rush back to the market. But on days when she doesn't cook, we see people eating various foods from the roadside stalls or hotels in the market. So, we start asking them for food too." "Some people, even after our requests, refuse to give us food and behave rudely, making strange faces and using foul language. They say, 'Not everyone deserves help.' We don't take offence at this because some people in the market are kind-hearted.

Sometimes, people feel sorry for us and arrange for us to have meals or fast food, which fills our stomachs." "You might wonder why we don't earn enough from selling toys to buy food for ourselves. When asked this, I explained that after returning from school, I earn around 100 to 150 rupees by selling toys. Everything available in this market is priced at 70 to 80 rupees or more. If we spend all that money, we struggle to manage household expenses. It's not that we beg every day; sometimes, there are community meals in the market or we find food on the streets, which helps us fill our stomachs."

CHILDREN SELL COCONUT WATER FROM A CART TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES FINANCIALLY

Reporter Kishan

In the Lajpat Nagar market of Delhi, Balaknama reporters reached out to street children and noticed that many children were involved in various types of work in the market. They saw a 14-year-old boy selling coconut water on a big cart in the market. The journalists approached the boy to inquire about him, and the boy explained that he currently lives in Delhi with his parents. His parents also work; his father works in a factory, and his mother runs a small biscuit shop. "I also sell coconut water, and this is my own business," he said. "Every day, I go to the market at 6:00 in the morning and buy coconut water from there.



Then I come home and set up my cart, and until 10:00 in the morning, I am in the market with my cart. Then I take my cart home and leave for home at 10:00 at night." Setting up a cart in the market area is not uncommon. The money also goes to the

place where I set up the cart. When I came to this place for the first time, I faced many difficulties in setting up the cart, and there was no place where I could set up my cart. Moreover, the authorities used to come daily and dismantle my cart and spill the coconut water, which resulted in daily losses. Now, the market chief pays ₹7000 per month to set up a cart at this location. I have no problem paying ₹7000 per month because I have suffered a lot of losses before and have also borrowed money from many people, but now I have paid off all my debts. Now, by selling coconut water, I earn around ₹400 to ₹500 daily and give it to my father at home to manage household expenses.

CHILDHOOD SUBSTANCE ABUSE POSES SIGNIFICANT HARDSHIPS



Local Reporter: Noorjehana

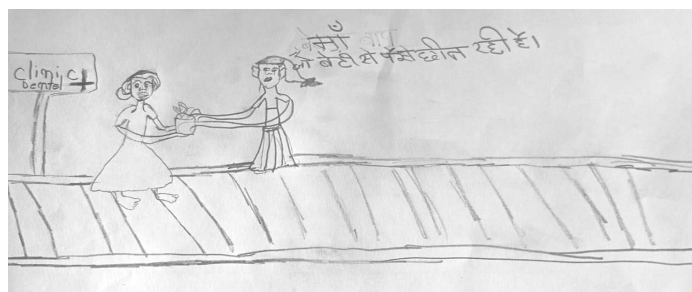
When child reporter Sarita visited the Ghata village in Gurugram, she encountered a girl named Noorjehana (changed name) living in a

slum. Upon conversing with her, the girl revealed, "I hail from Bengal, and I'm 12 years old. I reside here with my family, consisting of my parents, an elder brother, and a younger sister. We've been living in Ghata Gaon, Gurugram, for about four to five years. Our financial situation is not stable because my father consumes alcohol excessively, leading to frequent fights and violence at home. My mother works as a domestic helper in other people's homes, doing chores and cooking. Whatever money my mother earns, my father spends it on alcohol, which causes us a lot of distress and often results in heated arguments at home, depriving us of proper meals." Noorjehana continued, "My father even picks fights with people in the community, making it difficult for us to live here. Several times, the landlord has threatened to evict us from the slum, warning that if we continue to disturb everyone, we won't be allowed to stay here. So, where will we go in this inflationary world? Due to all this, we can't even go to school, and consequently, we don't receive a good education. Sometimes, we even struggle to get proper meals. If we're asked to vacate the slum, where will we go? How will we survive?" Noorjehana concluded by stating, "Because of my father's alcohol consumption, all three siblings have ultimately been deprived of education."

THE GIRL IS FORCED TO BEG DUE TO PARENTAL PRESSURE

Local Reporter- Shagufta, Balaknama reporter-Hans Kumar

In Delhi, especially in West Delhi, begging shows no signs of stopping. Consistently, young children can be seen begging on the streets. A case in point arose when Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited Zakheera in West Delhi. During conversations with the children, local reporter Shagufta informed them that there is a girl living near her house, whose name is Jainab (changed name). She is nine years old and attends classes at the learning center operated by Chetna NGO. After studying there, she returns home and goes out to beg at traffic lights and crowded places nearby. She mentioned that despite not wanting to, she is compelled to beg solely



due to the pressure from her parents because despite being healthy, her parents do not work. Until recently, her father used to work in a factory, but for some reasons, he lost his job and started staying at home. He doesn't even look for work now. As a result, all sources of income in the house have dried up. All the money from begging is taken by her father and spent at his discretion. Jainab attends classes in the morning shift at Chetna NGO's learning center. After that, she begs

until twelve o'clock, then goes home to eat and goes out again to beg under the pressure from her mother. If she refuses to beg, her mother beats her. Due to the money coming from begging, Jainab's parents are not getting her admitted to school because if she starts going to school, the money flow at home will stop. Moreover, she also has to do household chores. If any neighbor or well-wisher questions Jainab's parents about making the girl beg and not getting her admitted

to school, they say that she is their daughter and they will make her do whatever work they want. Jainab is talented in studies; she wants to become a good person through education, but at the age of studying and playing, her parents have forced the bowl of begging into the innocent girl's hands due to their laziness and poverty. Despite several campaigns by the administration to stop begging, begging persists. The biggest reason for this is that parents, driven by a little greed, make their children beg.

CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS

Child line Number
1098

Police Helpline Number
100

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SELLING LEMON AND CHILIES AT TRAFFIC LIGHTS AS A MEANS TO AFFORD MEAL

Balaknama reporter- Rajkishor,
Local Reporter -Javed

Today, we delve into the story of children who earn their living by selling lemon and chilies at traffic lights. During a visit to JMD Colony slum in Gurugram, Balaknama reporter Javed, he encountered a group of children engaged in this unique occupation. Upon learning about their plight, our journalists approached these children to understand why they resorted to selling these items at traffic lights. The children shared their dire circumstances,



highlighting the absence of any breadwinners in their households. Consequently, they resort to selling lemon and chilies at traffic lights

to sustain themselves. They explained how, at times, they struggle to even pay rent for their shanties due to their meager earnings from this activity. Despite tirelessly selling these items from morning till evening, they often earn a meager income ranging from 300 to 400 rupees. There are days when they return home empty-handed, going to bed hungry. This poignant account sheds light on the harsh realities faced by these children, who are compelled to endure hunger and hardship just to survive.



FAMILY DEBT FORCED THE CHILD TO DROP OUT OF SCHOOL AND BECOME AN E-RICKSHAW DRIVER

Balaknama reporter- Kishan

No matter how dire the financial situation at home, adhering to principles in life is essential, whether it involves easy or challenging methods. In Noida Sector 18 market, a 14-year-old boy was operating an e-rickshaw, and when our field reporter attempted to inquire about the reason behind it, the boy revealed his story. He explained that they currently reside in a rented room in Noida. Previously, he used to live in a village and attended school up to the third grade. However, due to loneliness, his parents called him to Noida so that he could stay in their sight. After arriving in Noida Sector 18, his father enrolled him in a government school a few months later, and he started attending school regularly. Everything was going well until trouble struck unexpectedly. His grandmother fell ill, and they incurred a significant debt for her treatment. Despite her recovery, she passed

away a few months later. To manage various expenses and repay debts for numerous programs, they borrowed money from people multiple times. However, after the programs concluded, they faced significant difficulties at home. Due to these hardships, his father withdrew him from school and asked him to work. Observing that many people were driving e-rickshaws, he inquired about how to acquire one and operate it. Local residents advised him that he needed some information to rent an e-rickshaw. He obtained information from his friends and approached an e-rickshaw owner. They negotiated a deal where he pays the owner Rs. 300 daily and Rs. 350 extra for battery charging, totaling Rs. 650 daily. He starts driving the e-rickshaw at 9:00 in the morning and continues until 9:00 at night. After deducting the expenses for battery charging and the owner's share, he earns Rs. 400 daily, which he gives to his father to manage household expenses and repay debts.

DISPLACED CHILDREN REMAIN DISTANT FROM EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT



Balaknama reporter- Akash,
Local Reporter-Vikas

During a visit to the slums of JDA Colony in Vidhyadhar Nagar, Jaipur, Balaknama reporter Akash, delved into the information provided by the children. It was revealed that behind the government toilets in the open field, there are more than 20 makeshift shelters where families and

children displaced from Uttar Pradesh reside. There are about 40-50 working children in these shelters, engaged in various forms of child labor activities, such as begging and other menial tasks. When our correspondent spoke with the children, a boy named Asif (changed name) revealed that he plays two broken pieces of stone like a musical instrument

using his fingers and thumbs to beg. He learned this skill from his friends, which he utilizes for begging as well. Another boy, Vikas (changed name), mentioned that he has been living with his aunt by the roadside for almost two years, engaging in begging, scavenging, and collecting recyclable materials like plastic to earn money. Both Asif and Vikas have never seen the inside of a school. They either beg with other children from the slums or showcase their talent with the sound of broken stones. Vikas expressed his despondency, mentioning that many people advise them to study, but they can't explain that they are constantly moving from one place to another in search of employment opportunities with their families every six months. Hearing about these children raises questions about whether they will ever have the opportunity to receive an education. Will their childhood circumstances allow for their education and holistic development?

NEGLECT BY PARENTS IS DRIVING CHILDREN TOWARD SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Local Reporter- Rohan,
Balaknama reporter -Sarita

During our visit to Emar Tower slum in Gurugram, Haryana, our field reporter Sarita encountered a child named Rohan (name changed) residing in one of the shanties. Rohan, an 8-year-old from Bengal, along with his entire family, migrated from Bengal to live in Badshahpur, Gurugram, in search of employment. Rohan revealed that his mother works as a domestic help in other households, while his father is currently incarcerated for reasons undisclosed. Additionally, he has an elder brother, aged 11, who indulges

in substance abuse with aimless peers in the streets. Elaborating further, Rohan explained that he used to attend classes at a local NGO center initially. However, due to his growing addiction, he has abandoned his studies altogether. He now partakes in substance abuse with other boys, which is significantly detrimental to his well-being. Moreover, his parents remain indifferent to his activities as they are preoccupied with work, leaving the children unsupervised to wander and engage in substance abuse freely. During an interview with



Rohan's brother, it was revealed that he no longer attends the center for education because he lacks the motivation to study. Despite

numerous invitations from the NGO center, he refuses to attend as his mother compels him to work instead. When questioned about their

substance abuse, he stated that it has become habitual for them, claiming that they suffer from physical discomfort if they refrain from it. He expressed his aspirations of becoming successful in life but lamented their impoverished circumstances, hindering any progress towards achieving his dreams. Rohan's narrative reflects the dire consequences of parental neglect and socioeconomic struggles on the aspirations and well-being of children like him. It underscores the urgent need for interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of such issues and providing support to vulnerable families to ensure a better future for their children.

CHILDREN RISK THEIR LIVES FOR A FEW COINS BY PICKING SCRAPS FROM MOVING TRAINS



Local Reporter- Yasir, Balaknama Reporter-Hans Kumar

At railway stations, inside train compartments, and at public places, children are often seen scavenging for empty bottles, plastic, and other scrap materials. Due to poverty, they are compelled to engage in this activity. A recent incident highlighted this when Balaknama reporter Hans Kumar visited Shakur Basti in West Delhi. There, local reporter Yasir informed him that some time ago, he had

gone to the main market with his mother for some work. To return, he decided to travel by train and reached the railway station near Zakheera. It was around eleven in the morning when he saw a group of seven or eight children carrying sacks on their shoulders entering the train as soon as it stopped at the local passenger train station. They began picking bottles and other scrap materials and putting them in their sacks. Shortly after, the train honked and started moving slowly, causing all the children to panic and try

to get off the train. However, one child couldn't get off because the train was slowly gaining speed, and the weight on his shoulders increased. In panic, the child jumped off the moving train, causing injuries to his hands and feet. His companions picked him up and took him away, and the boy was seen staggering slowly. Yasir asked one of the boys why they do this and what they do with the collected bottles. The child who picks scrap explained that his family lives in Shakur Basti, and his father is addicted to alcohol. His parents don't provide anything for household expenses. That's why his mother sends him to the railway station to collect and sell scrap. The boy said he earns around 100 to 150 rupees every day by selling scrap. Whatever he earns during the day, he gives it to his mother. He mentioned that there is a large number of children picking scrap, so there is competition among them. The child who boards the train first gathers more empty bottles and scrap. Due to competition, children do not wait for the train to stop at the platform but board it as soon as it reaches the outer area of the station. This often leads to accidents for the children.

FATHER'S ALCOHOL ADDICTION AND BANDONMENT OF WIFE RESULT IN NEGLECT OF DAUGHTER

Local Reporter: Punit, Balaknama reporter- Hans Kumar



During a visit to Valmiki Camp in West Delhi, balaknama reporter Hans Kumar was informed by the local reporter Punit that there is a girl named Karina (name changed) living near his house. She is nine years old and studies in the fifth grade. Her father consumes alcohol daily and remains intoxicated. Currently, there are four members living in her house: Anushka, her father, grandmother, and aunt. Until recently, her mother and younger sister also lived with them. However, due to frequent domestic disputes between her parents, one night her mother left with her younger sister. This deeply affected her father, leading him to succumb to the vice of alcohol addiction. Now, whenever he comes home, he is in an inebriated state and ignores Karina. He now neglects her and blames her for resembling her mother, thus harboring hatred towards her. Despite her elderly

grandmother's attempts to reason with her father about the girl's innocence, he refuses to listen. His sister's health also frequently deteriorates. Her father no longer buys necessary items for her, including school supplies like notebooks, pens, etc. Recently, her school shoes got torn, but her father did not buy her new ones. Due to the neglect by her father, she has started missing school. She still wishes to go to school, but due to the lack of essential items, she cannot.



THE WATER TANKER ACCIDENT HAS SEVERELY AFFECTED THE CHILDREN WORKING IN THE AREA

Local Reporter- Sumit, Balaknama reporter-Raj Kishor

Today, we are going to narrate an incident that has deeply affected the children working on the streets. During a visit to Vajirabad Basti in Gurugram, our reporters engaged in conversations with these children. During the conversation, the children recounted an incident that occurred a few days prior. A group of children was playing near the Sai Baba temple when a water tanker approached. They were standing there, planning to resume playing after the tanker passed by. However, as they moved forward, the tanker suddenly reversed, resulting in one of the children getting injured. The child started crying

loudly, prompting nearby residents to gather and inquire about the situation. Upon noticing the severe bleeding from the child's foot, they asked the children about the cause of the injury. They explained how the sudden reversal of the water tanker led to the accident. Upon hearing this, the residents became furious and began confronting the driver, expressing their anger over the reckless driving that endangered the child's life. After a heated argument and persuasion, the driver agreed to arrange medical treatment for the injured child. However, this incident has instilled fear among the children, making them apprehensive even in seemingly safe areas near their homes.

TROUBLESOME ADOLESCENTS ENABLING UNDERAGE INTOXICANTS CONSUMPTION

Local Reporter, Balaknama reporter- Rajkishor



Today, we bring forth an incident that is impacting the lives of children, stemming from troublesome adolescents. During a visit to Wazirabad slum by reporter, Sumit, a concerning revelation came to light. Balaknama reporter encountered a child named Sumit (name changed) outside the Sai Temple, who disclosed distressing activities prevalent in the vicinity. According to him, children under the age of 15 gather near the temple premises, indulging in substance abuse and engaging in physical altercations. He narrated instances where younger children, possessing any item of value, are subjected to physical violence and robbery. Those who refuse to comply face verbal abuse and physical assault. When these children seek help from their parents, explaining the harassment they endure near the Sai Temple, they are met with further aggression. Their parents confront the unruly adolescents, only to

be met with abusive language and threats. He recounted an alarming incident where children were coerced into substance abuse against their will, and even resorting to theft to fund their vices, including cigarettes,

alcohol, and marijuana. Sumit's account sheds light on a distressing reality, where underage children are exposed to harmful substances and subjected to violence due to the actions of delinquent adolescents.

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CHILD SELLING PLANTS DOOR-TO-DOOR TO SUPPORT FAMILY FINANCIALLY

Local reporters Junaid, Balaknam reporter-Kishan.

While interacting with children in Noida, reporters were trying to find out how many children in the area engage in various activities. During this, they met an 11-year-old boy living in the slum who introduced himself as Manish (changed name) and stated that he currently lives near Sector 101 in Noida with his parents in a

shanty. He shared that while staying here, I also work; there are four members in my family - parents, a sister, and a brother. We also have our own plant shop. I wake up every morning and spend the day taking care of the plants and sometimes planting them in the nearby buildings. From morning till noon, I water the plants, give them medicine, fertilize them, and also cut their grass. We buy these plants from far away,



my father orders them over the phone, and sometimes he has to go to get them himself.

My mother and I manage the shop. I also have a small cart, and whenever I have to go somewhere, I use this cart. Many people in the nearby buildings need plants to be planted, so they call us and say they need a plant, we tell them the price of the plant, and we bring the plant they ask for. To plant the plants, we keep a pot, a plant, and soil in the cart and then go to the flat to plant the plant. Each plant has different prices

starting from Rs. 50, and the bigger the plant, the higher the price. When we go to plant the plants at home, we also take separate money for planting the plant, meaning we charge Rs. 30 for planting one plant. We go to different buildings throughout the day and plant 10-20 plants, and after planting the plants, I come home and study in my free time, and this way I support the household expenses by planting plants.

THE ATTEMPTED KIDNAPPING FOILED BY THE INGENUITY OF FRIENDS

Local Reporter: Lavanya, Balaknama reporter- Hans Kumar

During a visit to Shaheed Camp slum in West Delhi, our reporter Hans Kumar was informed by the local reporter Lavanya, a commotion ensued in the camp when three disguised individuals, impersonating clowns, attempted to kidnap a girl who was walking home from school, separate from her group of friends, near the park. Sensing the danger, Lavanya, witnessing the incident, quickly raised an alarm and rushed to inform



other children about the incident. She gathered them at the scene and apprehended the would-be kidnapers. Although the kidnapers

managed to escape due to the lack of a mobile phone with any of the children to inform the police, the timely intervention of Lavanya and her friends saved the innocent girl from being abducted. Nowadays, there are many such gangs active, changing disguises and forming small groups to roam around, with intentions to abduct children. Lavanya highlighted that children now fear returning home from school through the park route and even avoid playing in the park altogether due to such incidents. Many children have changed their routes as a precaution.



EMPOWERED GIRLS THROUGH ORGANIZED MENSTRUAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Empowered girls through organized menstrual health program

During a visit to the Mangyavas Basti, Reporter Kajal observed some women and adolescent girls engaged in conversation. Intrigued, she joined them and attempted to learn about their experiences, issues, and events in their lives. In this interaction, our conversational reporter Lakshmi shared that a few days ago, a distribution of sanitary pads was conducted by the Chetna Education Center, where they were informed about the problems faced during menstruation and

the precautions to be taken during this time. Lakshmi, a young girl, mentioned that she attended this program with her mother, who taught her how to use sanitary pads during menstruation as she was previously unaware of it. Through this program, they learned why the use of sanitary pads is essential and how to use them properly. Lakshmi added with a smile that her mother also participated in the program, which changed her perspective. She confidently stated that she will now use pads for her safety, and she will also educate her friends about it.

FATHER SCOLDED SON FOR PHONE ADDICTION; SON LEFT HOME IN ANGER

Local Reporter-Badshah, Balaknama reporter-Reporter Rajkishor

When our reporter visited the settlements near the Jalvayu tower in Gurugram, our reporter was informed by the local reporter Badshah that there is a child in our settlements who goes to school every day, but one day his father beat him, causing the child to run away from home at night. Then his parents searched a lot for him, but when they couldn't find him, they became very worried and cried a lot. After that, the parents went to the police station and filed a report. Finally, the police



found the child and the police officers told his parents that children should not be beaten; children get angry over small things, which is why they take such steps. The police officers also said

that it's best to understand children as much as possible; otherwise, they take wrong steps. When the reporter went to meet the child, they asked him why he ran away from home and took such a step. The child explained that he used to look at the phone a lot, so his father beat him, which made him angry, and he ran away from home. Our reporter told him not to do such wrong things because he doesn't realize how much trouble his parents had to go through because of him. The child said that he won't make such mistakes anymore and he won't look at the phone excessively so that his parents don't have to suffer.

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

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