

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.

GARMI KI JHAPPI 2.0 CAMPAIGN CHETNA BRINGS COMFORT TO STREET CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BATTLING THE COLD

Balaknama Reporters: Kajal, Deepak, Rajkishore, Kishan

Being born into poverty might be common, but spending an entire life in poverty could be one of the greatest challenges. Poverty brings many hardships in life, preventing progress and acting as a barrier to fulfilling dreams. When we see children and their families struggling with financial difficulties, our hearts are inspired to help them. Those who empathize with their struggles and extend a helping hand not only transform others' lives but also bring about positive change in society. Chetna NGO runs education clubs or alternative education centers across various states, supporting street and working children. Considering the cold season, sweaters, jackets, quilts, and tarpaulins were distributed to these children to provide them relief from the harsh weather. This year, under the "Warm Hug 2.0" campaign, 500 sweaters were distributed to children in education centers operating in Delhi's slums,



and another 500 sweaters were given to needy children in government schools. Now, let us share the thoughts of the children who received this relief material in different states. Sweaters and jackets were distributed at education clubs or contact points for street and working children in Delhi. On this occasion, 11-year-old

Tarun (name changed), who lives near Shivaji Park in West Delhi, shared his experience:

"At our government school, sweaters were given to children in grades 3, 4, and 5. When we received the sweaters, we were very happy. Earlier, I had only one sweater, which I had to wear every day. It would get dirty, but now I have a second

sweater, so I can wear them alternately." A 15-year-old girl living in a slum said, "There are many families here who earn just enough to make ends meet and cannot afford warm clothes for their children. Earlier, children without warm clothes would collect garbage to burn and keep warm. But now, since the children have

received jackets, they not only attend school but also play in the evenings, which wasn't possible earlier due to the cold." Similarly, in Jaipur, 500 sweaters were distributed to street and working children under the "Sweater Waali Jhappi" campaign to help them continue their education during the cold weather. When Balaknama journalists in Jaipur spoke to the beneficiary children, it became clear that this relief was no less than a blessing for those who face the challenges of changing seasons every year. Considering these difficulties, Chetna NGO organized the "Sweater Waali Jhappi" program to protect children from the cold during winter. Local councilors, police officers, and teachers participated in this program and distributed sweaters to the children. The main objective of this initiative was not only to provide relief from the cold but also to connect children with education, integrate them into mainstream society, and sensitize stakeholders to their

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AWARENESS RISING: STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Damini

In the informal settlement of Jaysinghpura Khor in Jaipur, awareness about legal identity and rights is rapidly increasing among street and working children. These children have actively participated in the process of obtaining birth certificates, not only taking responsibility for their own documents but also helping others in their community.

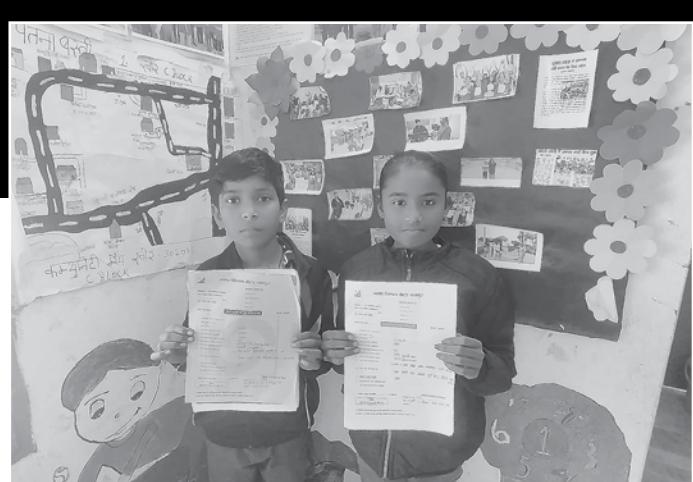
Damini (12 years old) and Jaidev (12 years old), who study at the Chetna NGO Alternative Education Center

Khor 1, learned the process of filling out birth certificate forms with the help of local officials and teachers. They then filled out their own forms and started assisting other children and families in their community with the process.

Damini explains that when it comes to obtaining official documents, the first step is filling out the necessary forms. Without knowledge of this process, people hesitate to take action. She faced this challenge several times but is now happy that she has learned how to fill out a birth

certificate form, where to submit it, and how the entire process works. She is now sharing this knowledge with others in her community so that more children can obtain their birth certificates. These documents are essential for education, government schemes, and employment opportunities.

Jaidev emphasizes that if children like him take responsibility for understanding and managing the documentation process, many challenges related to official paperwork can be resolved. Their initiative has



created an atmosphere of enthusiasm in the community, with many recognizing it as a sign of children's intelligence and self-reliance.

This effort is not only boosting the children's confidence in their abilities but also bringing pride and

satisfaction to their families. Their initiative serves as an inspiration for other children in society. Given the right direction and guidance, children can bring positive change not just for themselves but for their entire community.

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THE GROWING THREAT OF CHILD LABOUR IN SETTLEMENTS

Reporters: Talkative Rahul and Reporter Shambhu

Recently, reporters visited a crowded area in Noida to observe the conditions of street and working children. A few years ago, the prevalence of child labour in this region was significantly high, but over time, it had started to decline. However, it was observed during this visit that children are once again being drawn into child labour, working in small roadside eateries washing dishes and performing minor tasks in hotels.

When reporters tried to engage

these children in conversation, they were initially hesitant to speak, fearing that their employers might mistreat them for talking. After some reassurance, the children shared their experiences, revealing that they were not working out of their own will. They explained that a man from their village brought them here to work, with the full consent of their parents.

The children disclosed that their parents sent them to work so they could save money for their elder sisters' weddings, especially with the upcoming wedding season in March and



April. Despite their young age, they are burdened with heavy responsibilities. They shared the difficulties they face, such as washing dishes in icy cold water during winter and staying awake all night as the shops remain open 24 hours a day. These children dream of receiving an education but are unable to pursue it due to their family obligations. They expressed their desire for better treatment and a chance to escape this harsh reality. They urged for strict action to be taken against such practices to bring positive changes in their lives.

RIDING BORROWED BICYCLES, CHASING INNOCENT DREAMS

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Golu

Everyone has dreams, but not everyone has the means to fulfill them. The children of JDA Bapu Basti in Jaipur have found a unique way to pursue their dreams despite their limited circumstances. Many children in this settlement cannot afford to buy a bicycle, as their parents' financial situation does not allow them to purchase even a second-hand one. However, instead of giving up, these children have found a way to fulfill their desire to ride a bicycle—by renting one for ₹10 per hour. A local shopkeeper, understanding their need, started renting bicycles to them. The children happily pay ₹10, ride for hours, and then return the bicycle. Around 20-25 children are fulfilling their wish to ride in this way. Golu (11

years old) shared that he used to have an old bicycle, but it is now broken. So, he saves money and rents a bicycle whenever he can, sometimes for ₹10 and sometimes for ₹20. Kajal (13 years old) said that whenever her mother gives her money, she saves some of it to rent a bicycle, as the experience brings her immense joy. The shopkeeper explained that most families in the settlement struggle financially, making it difficult for them to buy bicycles for their children. On average, 8-9 bicycles are rented daily from his shop. Vishal (name changed) shared that he collects scrap or burns copper to earn money for bicycle rentals. Sometimes, he also earns money by working in the market. For these children, a bicycle is not just a means of transport but a source of happiness, even if for a short time.

HARSH WINTER INTENSIFIES CHALLENGES FOR STREET CHILDREN

Reporters: Talkative Sultan and Reporter Shambhu

Balaknama's reporters met with street and working children during this severe winter to understand how they are coping with life in such conditions. They discovered that the extreme cold has worsened the situation for these children and their families, as they are unable to find proper shelter to protect themselves from the cold. When the reporters spoke to the children, they shared their struggles. The children explained that they often travel long distances to fetch water, but the water has become so cold that they cannot even use it for bathing. Due to the harsh weather, they are unable to find dry firewood,



making it impossible to heat water. Additionally, there is no electricity where they live, leaving them with no alternative source of help. The reporters also encountered children wearing dirty clothes. When asked why, the children explained that the cold weather makes it difficult for their clothes to dry for several days. Since they live in overcrowded

spaces and already have very few clothes, their parents cannot wash and dry them quickly. As a result, they are forced to wear the same dirty clothes for many days.

The children expressed their concerns, saying they wish for proper arrangements to protect them from the biting cold so they can stay warm and look clean.

CHETNA BRINGS COMFORT TO STREET CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BATTING THE COLD

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needs. During the program, street and working children shared their experiences. For example, 11-year-old Golu, who lives in Jaipur's JDA Kachhi Basti, expressed his happiness, saying,

"I didn't have a sweater to wear to school, but now I have one. I can now go to school comfortably and look like everyone else."

Kanak, who lives in Khor Basti, said, "The police uncle gave us sweaters and also taught us to stay away from crime and bad habits and to become good citizens." This program was very special for the children. Their faces lit up with joy as they received the sweaters, which also provided them with much-needed relief from the cold. Chetna NGO's initiative not only helped protect children from the winter chill but also motivated them to attend school. Let's now turn towards Noida to see what was distributed there and what the children had to say about it. In Noida, quilts, tarpaulins, and jackets were distributed to

help protect against the cold. A 14-year-old girl, Rupa (name changed), from a settlement in Greater Noida shared, "When the CHETNA organization staff came to our settlement and informed us that we would receive jackets, quilts, and other items, our faces lit up with joy. They even gave us a slip, which we used to collect the essential items." She added, "We are not wealthy enough to buy good warm clothes. Whatever our parents earn goes into managing household expenses. Many children in our settlement don't have sufficient warm clothes and spend winters wearing the same shirt or outfit. But we're happy that, with CHETNA's support, we now have jackets to keep us warm."

A 15-year-old boy, Jeetan (name changed), who lives near Char Murti, shared, "Every winter, we are forced to think about how to stay warm. In summer, clothes aren't as much of an issue, but in winter, warm clothes are a necessity. In our settlement, many parents work at construction sites,

and sometimes they bring old clothes from their employers for their children. But for those whose parents don't have such jobs, the cold is very difficult to bear. Occasionally, someone donates clothes, which helps a few children, but when no one comes, we struggle to stay warm. This time, CHETNA provided us with jackets, and we're very happy."

A 17-year-old girl, Sneha (name changed), expressed, "We only have two blankets to share—one is used by my father, and the other by my mother, leaving us to manage with whatever we can. But two blankets aren't enough to keep us warm. Now that we've received this quilt, we'll make full use of it and sleep peacefully without being troubled by the cold." In Gurugram, during the distribution of jackets and socks, children shared their experiences. Twelve-year-old Prakash Kumar (name changed), whose father works as a laborer and mother works as a house cleaner, explained that his parents' income is not sufficient to buy warm clothes

for their children. "Most of their earnings go towards rent and food," he said. However, when Prakash received a jacket and socks through CHETNA's initiative, he was extremely happy. Not only him, but his parents were also overjoyed to see their child in warm clothing. They remarked, "We didn't have enough money to buy warm clothes for our children, but now they will be safe from the cold."

Raveena, an 11-year-old girl, shared, "My father drives an auto on rent. When someone asked me if I had warm clothes, I replied, 'No, I only have one old, torn sweater with a broken zipper.' I wanted my father to get me new warm clothes, but I couldn't ask him because of our poor financial condition." One day, when Raveena went to the center, she learned that warm clothes and socks would be distributed to children through CHETNA. Hearing this, she was overjoyed. The next day, the organization's staff distributed jackets and socks to all the children. Raveena was one of the recipients. As soon

as she received the jacket and socks, she ran home excitedly and showed her father, saying, "Look, Dad! I got a jacket and socks from CHETNA!" Seeing this, her father was also very happy. In Lucknow, under the "Garmi Ki Jhappi 2.0" campaign, a large-scale distribution of woolen clothes was carried out to provide relief from the cold to street and working children. As part of this initiative, hundreds of children were given sweaters, jackets, and warm clothes to ensure they remain safe during the winter and can continue their education without any interruptions.

Local organizations, administration, and community members also collaborated during this campaign to ensure that warm clothes reached the needy children on time. The joy and relief in the children's eyes made it evident that this campaign was not only essential for their physical comfort but also helped them stay connected to society and move toward their future with confidence.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE: "LET'S TALK ABOUT PERIODS" PROGRAM HELD

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Sapna

Balaknama reporters visited various informal settlements in Jaipur, where they learned that a few days ago, Chetna organization conducted a program called "Let's Talk About Periods." This initiative was part of Chetna's Menstrual Dialogue campaign, aimed at raising awareness among adolescent girls, their mothers, and sisters about menstrual hygiene and breaking associated myths.

Reporters interacted with young girls who attended the program to understand their experiences. Smiling, Sapna

(name changed) shared, "Menstruation is nothing to hide; it's our strength!" Thirteen-year-old Kavita (name changed) said, "Earlier, I had no knowledge about periods, but today I learned the importance of using sanitary pads correctly and disposing of them properly."

Radha (name changed), another adolescent from the community, shared her experience, "At home, talking about this was forbidden, but today, I openly discussed it with my mother. Now, I no longer feel scared."

To break menstrual myths, Chetna's team conducted interactive



activities, including games and storytelling, reinforcing that menstruation is about understanding, not shame.

Participants created posters and slogans like "We need to talk about periods" and "Menstruation is our

strength."

The organization held this program across 10 informal settlements in Jaipur, reaching approximately 400 adolescent girls, distributing sanitary pads to promote menstrual hygiene. Fourteen-year-old Nisha (name changed) suggested, "If we receive this education in every school, even more girls will become aware."

The success of this initiative was a collaborative effort by Chetna's team, adolescent girls, and their families. Through their creativity, the participants made the discussions engaging and impactful.

INNOCENCE STRUGGLING IN SEARCH OF EDUCATION

Reporter: Shambhu
Talkative Reporter: Veer

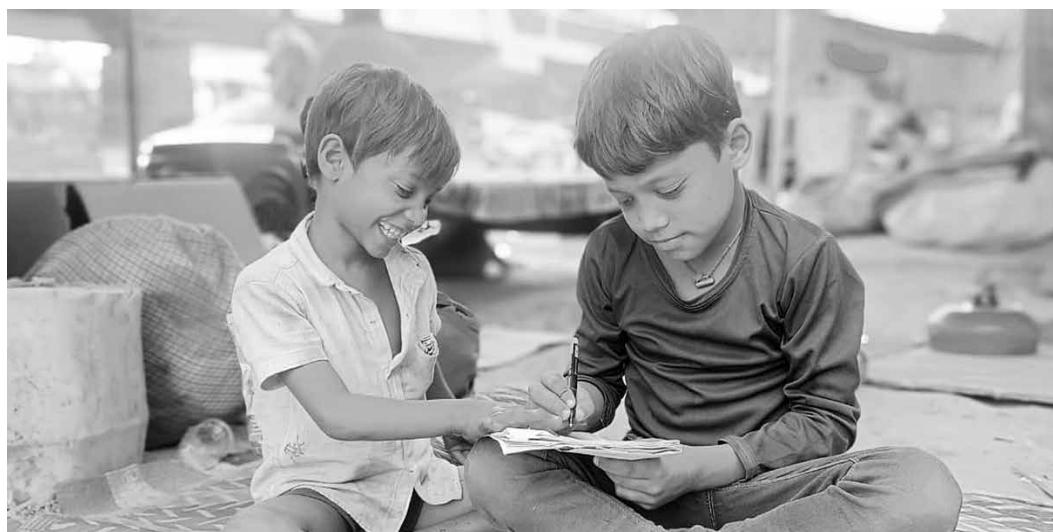
Eight-year-old Mir (name changed) hails from Uttar Pradesh. Due to a lack of work opportunities in his village, Mir and his family moved to the capital city, Delhi. They currently live under a bridge, trying to make ends meet. Mir shared, "There are six members in my family. My elder brother is married and lives separately. I have two younger siblings whom I have to take care of because my parents are out working all day. I also beg for money. I don't like this work, but we have no other choice." Mir dreams of going to school, but his responsibilities as a caretaker for his younger siblings prevent him from

pursuing education. He explained, "A social worker from Chetna Foundation visits us and teaches me, and I've learned a lot from them. But I

want to attend a proper school so I can secure a brighter future. Whatever I've learned, I've also taught my younger siblings. I love education, but

the circumstances at home don't allow me to go to school." Mir has often discussed his dreams with his parents, but their uncertain living

conditions make it difficult for them to enroll him in school. He shared their perspective: "My parents say we don't have a permanent place to stay—we live here for four months and move somewhere else for two months. They tell me to learn some work that will help me in the future. But I believe that even to learn work, education is important. Without studying, how will I manage accounts or understand things?" Mir dreams of at least completing grade 12 to avoid the stigma of being uneducated. "I also want my younger siblings to study and brighten their lives, so they don't end up begging like me. We want someone to help us fulfill our basic needs so we can move forward in life," he said.



CHILDREN FORCED INTO CHILD LABOUR TO FULFILL THEIR DREAMS



Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Jugnu

Balaknama reporter Deepak recently visited various settlements in Jaipur. During his visit, he came across a boy working at a bicycle repair shop near 52 Foot Balaji on Agra Road. When the reporter tried to learn more about the boy's name and family, the boy introduced himself as Chinu (name changed) and shared that he lives with his family in Paldi Basti in a rented house. When asked about school, 13-year-old Chinu responded with noticeable sadness. He shared that while many of his relatives in Jaipur are financially well-off and own their own homes, his parents work as daily laborers

and struggle to make ends meet. Chinu said, "Our relatives often taunt us and argue because we live in a rented house and don't have a home of our own."

Chinu explained that he works to support his parents in saving money to buy a house. At the bicycle shop, he earns ₹70 per day, working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. He said, "I really want to go to school and study, but that's just not possible. If I start

going to school, I won't be able to earn money, and my dream of owning a house will remain unfulfilled. To make my dream a reality, I have to help my parents by working."

It is society's responsibility to ensure that children like Chinu are given the right opportunities and access to education to achieve their dreams, rather than subjecting them to child labour through neglect or scorn.

CHILDREN'S HELP LINE NUMBERS
CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY PROBLEM.

Child line Number
1098
Police Helpline Number
100

LIFE MADE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN, FORCED TO BEG UNDER PRESSURE

Talkative Reporter: Aradhana,
Balaknama Reporter: Shambhu

Balaknama reporters visited a locality in Delhi to understand the struggles faced by children. The children shared their troubles, saying, "Life has become very difficult for us because our parents' work is not going well. They expect us to earn money, but we are unable to do so." The children explained that they used to beg near a metro station, but police vigilance has increased there. When they approach passersby for help, the police stop them. As a result, their earnings have drastically reduced, causing their parents to be upset with them. The children



tried begging in other places, but they did not have much

success there either. They said, "We want to continue this

work without interruptions because it is the only way

our families can survive. Due to the cold weather, our parents are unable to work at all." Their parents send them to beg at temples, mosques, and gurdwaras, but people mostly offer food instead of money. This makes their parents angry, and they force the children to ask for money so that other family members can eat. The children said, "If we don't bring money, our parents scold us and force us to beg in this harsh winter day and night. If this continues, our health will deteriorate, and we might not survive the cold." Finally, the children made an appeal: "We want someone to explain to our parents that they should not put us through such torture."

CHILDREN SELLING PENS AT TRAFFIC SIGNALS TO EARN MONEY



Talkative Reporter: Sumit
Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishore

While heading to visit slum areas in Gurugram, Balaknama reporter Rajkishore noticed a group of children, around 12 or 13 years old, sitting near a red-

light signal with two blankets at approximately 7:30 PM. When the signal turned red, these children approached cars, knocked on windows, and pleaded, "Sister, Brother, please buy a pen." However, most people ignored them. Curious about their situation,

Rajkishore approached the children. Upon seeing him, the children said, "Brother, please buy a pen." When asked why they were working like this, the children felt shy and ran away. A few moments later, their mother appeared. The reporter asked her why she was making her children work at such a young age when they should be in school. He also pointed out that the children were exposed to the cold weather while selling pens at the signal.

The mother explained, "This is our helplessness. My children and I sell pens for a living. We also clean car windows at signals. When a car stops, we clean the windows and try to sell pens too. Sometimes, someone gives us 5 rupees, but many times, we get nothing." When asked where they lived, she replied, "We don't have a home, so we sleep on the footpath. We spend our days selling pens at red-light signals and our nights sleeping on the streets."

CHILD INJURED AFTER FALLING FROM ROOF

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Raj

A Balaknama reporter visited various informal settlements in Jaipur to learn about the problems and experiences of street and working children. An 11-year-old boy, Jeet (name changed), from the Jaysinghpura settlement, shared his story of a recent accident. A few days ago, Jeet was flying kites with his friend on the rooftop. A friendly competition had developed among the children to see who could cut down the most kites and catch them. In his eagerness to win, Jeet not only focused on flying kites but also attempted to catch them. While trying to grab a kite by leaning over the edge of the roof, he lost his balance and fell. Some residents of the settlement, who were sitting nearby, saw Jeet falling and immediately rushed to help. They acted promptly and took him to the hospital for treatment. The doctor found a deep wound on his head that required 10 stitches. Jeet's parents expressed their



gratitude to the community members for quickly getting their son to the hospital. After the incident, Jeet's parents prohibited him and his friends from going to the rooftop. They encouraged them to fly kites and play only in open fields, avoiding dangerous challenges or rules. Upon learning about the incident, Talkative Reporter Raj educated the children in the settlement on safety precautions to follow while flying kites. He emphasized the importance of being alert during such activities and prioritizing their safety at all times.

DREAMS BUILT ON LOTTERY: STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S STRUGGLE

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Anuja

Children living in slums are often compelled to rely on lotteries to meet their needs and support their families, shedding light on the harsh realities of society. One such story emerged from the Kacchi Basti Kali Ka Bhatta in Jaipur. A Balaknama reporter spoke with street and working children to delve deeper into this issue. Anuja, a young girl, shared

that around 20 children in her slum participate in lotteries. They save ₹10 daily, which adds up to ₹300 by the end of the month. A lottery draw then determines the winner, who receives the collective amount on a rotational basis. If needed, the winner can lend this money at interest. The children invest their small savings in these lotteries, hoping to fulfill their and their families' needs. With the money they win, they often buy school-related items like



notebooks, books, pencils, and school bags. They also purchase necessities such as new clothes, shoes, or other essential items. Some even share a portion of their winnings with their families to provide financial relief. This scenario highlights the resilience and determination of these children, who strive to improve their circumstances despite limited resources. However, it's worth noting that participating in such games carries significant risks, as children might lose their savings.

ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY DRAIN EXCAVATION CREATING PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN AND LOCAL RESIDENTS

Reporter: Rajkishore

While visiting Sector-52, Wazirabad, Haryana, reporter Rajkishore discovered that the drain excavation near an under-construction building has significantly increased the problems for local residents. The excavation has left a large open pit, which has become a serious hazard for the community.

Local residents reported that this pit has been left uncovered for several days, with no safety measures in place around it. Recently, a child playing nearby fell into the pit. Fortunately, the

child was safely rescued and sustained only minor injuries. Women from the area also expressed their concerns. One woman said, "This pit is putting everyone's lives at risk, especially children. Who will take responsibility if something happens? Children playing here can fall at any time. The administration and the construction agency have shown no responsibility at all."

This incident has sparked anger among local residents, who believe that the authorities and the construction agency have neglected public safety. One



resident stated, "This pit is not only inviting accidents

but also creating significant trouble for those passing by."

The pit has not only increased the risk of accidents but has also disrupted traffic in the area. Drivers passing by have to be extra cautious, and the water accumulation in the pit has raised concerns about diseases like dengue and malaria.

Local citizens have demanded that the administration promptly fill the pit and implement safety measures to prevent such incidents in the future. This situation serves as a clear example of negligence on the part of the administration and the construction agency. Now, the question remains: how long will it take to resolve this issue?

SPREADING TB IN SETTLEMENTS POSING A THREAT TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Jaydev

News has emerged from the settlement in Jaipur that children are being infected with tuberculosis (TB). To gather complete information, a Balaknama reporter visited the settlement, where child Jaydev shared that due to the lack of healthcare facilities and awareness, the disease is spreading rapidly. Not only adults but young children are also being affected. This situation is extremely critical and requires immediate attention.

The settlement faces a severe



shortage of sanitation and healthcare facilities. Residents in these areas neither receive nutritious food nor adequate medical services. This is weakening children's immunity, making them more vulnerable to diseases like TB. We all know that TB spreads through the air from one person to another. The bacteria responsible for TB spread in the air when a person with active TB in the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, or speaks. People nearby can inhale these bacteria and become infected. Currently, around 10 adults in the settlement were

known to have this disease, but now 5 children have also been affected. Although these children are receiving treatment at the nearby primary health center, the disease continues to spread due to a lack of precautions during treatment. Infected children play with other children in the settlement, further accelerating the spread. The government runs a National TB Elimination Program, but it seems its reach does not extend adequately to informal settlements. The lack of medication and awareness remains a significant obstacle to controlling this disease.

COMMUNITY CHANGE THROUGH STREET CHILDREN'S LEADERSHIP



Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Siya

Children from the Chetna Alternative Education Center located in the Jai Singhpura Khor settlement raised their voices on safety issues by submitting a formal complaint letter to the local councillor. The letter highlighted problems such as a garbage pile behind the education center, lack of

cleanliness in the settlement, and irregular municipal garbage collection. The children emphasized that the unhygienic conditions were causing health issues for the residents. Initially, the local councillor ignored the children's complaint, but the center's young leaders remained persistent. Staying aware of their safety and rights, they regularly followed up with the councillor about

the status of their complaint. Eventually, the councillor took prompt action and directed municipal workers to prioritize cleaning tasks in the area.

Thanks to the children's initiative and efforts, the garbage was removed, and a cleanliness drive was successfully conducted in the settlement. The residents, along with the children, were delighted and expressed their gratitude to the councillor. The children thanked the councillor, saying their voices were heard and their problem was resolved. The local residents praised the children's efforts and pledged to maintain cleanliness in the area. This incident clearly demonstrates that when public representatives take proactive steps, local problems can be effectively resolved.

BEGGING IS NOT AS EASY AS IT SEEMS

Reporters: Talkative Sultan and Reporter Shambhu

Balaknama reporters held a meeting with street and working children, during which the children openly discussed their struggles. They shared that every day brings new challenges, yet they somehow manage to keep moving forward in life.

During the conversation, the children revealed that the recent opening of several momo and burger stalls near metro stations has attracted a large number of people. When the children approach these stalls to beg, the shopkeepers often chase them away with sticks. If they don't leave, they are subjected to verbal abuse and, at times, even pushed around.

The shopkeepers argue that the children's dirty clothes create a negative impression on their customers, which is why they behave this way. However, the children believe this treatment is unfair, as they only ask for a few coins from the customers. They expressed that they, too, are part of society and deserve love, respect, and a safe life, free from such mistreatment.

CHILDHOOD FINDS NEW HOPE IN A NEW SHELTER



Talkative Reporter Dilkush,
Reporter Kishan

Let's discover how street and working children turn their small joys into big celebrations. When Balaknama reporters visited children living in some slums of Noida, 15-year-old Ramesh (name changed) shared his story about finding happiness. "We have been living in Noida for several

years now. There are five members in my family—my parents, two brothers, and one sister. My parents work as laborers, while my elder brother works in a company in Delhi and lives there," Ramesh said. "Earlier, we lived near Char Murti in Noida with our parents, who worked as laborers in nearby buildings. Life there had become very challenging because, with rising expenses,

saving even a single rupee was becoming increasingly difficult. My father had taken a loan to build a house in the village, but he hasn't been able to repay it yet. Life is unpredictable—happiness and sadness come and go without warning." He went on to share a significant moment, saying, "One day, a man came to our settlement looking for laborers. My parents met him, and he told them that construction work was going on in a market area near Char Murti. He promised to give us a free hut to live in, along with water, electricity, and restroom facilities. My father was overjoyed when he heard this and thought that by moving there, we could save the monthly rent and repay the loan faster." Now, Ramesh and his family live in a slum near the CharMurti market area. They save money on rent, live in the hut provided, and are quite content with their new life.



CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, A TEENAGE GIRL RAISES MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AWARENESS IN HER COMMUNITY

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak, Talkative Reporter: Pooja

When a Balaknama reporter visited Ganeshpuri slum in Jaipur, they witnessed a positive transformation. Pooja (name changed), a 13-year-old girl from a modest family, has become an inspiration for her community. By participating in Chetna NGO "Mahawari Samvad" (Menstrual Dialogue) program, Pooja not only changed her own perspective but also brought awareness to her community. Before attending the program, Pooja and her friends lacked accurate information about menstrual hygiene. Due to cultural taboos and shame, they avoided using sanitary napkins. However, after participating in the "Mahawari Samvad" session, Pooja learned about the biological process of menstruation, the importance of maintaining hygiene, and the correct use of sanitary napkins. Now, Pooja not only uses sanitary napkins herself but also encourages her friends and women in her neighborhood to do the same. Her efforts have led to a reduction in myths surrounding menstruation in the community. Today, girls and women openly request sanitary napkins from nearby Anganwadi centers. Pooja's confidence and inspiring story prove that even a small step can spark a significant change.

REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATION ADORNED BY THE PARTICIPATION OF STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN



Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Vivaan

During the Republic Day celebrations at various government schools in Jaipur, street and working children showcased their exceptional talents. Their captivating dance and singing performances won the hearts

of the guests present at the event. The children shared that they had practiced for several days to perfect their performances, and performing on stage felt like a dream come true for them. Excitedly, Vivaan said, "For the first time, we got such a big platform to showcase our skills. What we learned

during the Child Leadership Workshop organized by CHETNA, we presented it with confidence. When we performed on stage, everyone clapped for us. It was a moment of pride for us." The guests at the event appreciated the children's enthusiasm and artistic skills. Recognizing their hard work and dedication, the children were presented with gifts. On this occasion, various social organizations and officials wished the children a bright future and pledged continuous support for their upliftment. The children's performances proved that with proper guidance and support, they too can achieve great heights in life.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN DELIGHTED AFTER WATCHING KHO-KHO WORLD CUP

Reporter- Suman

India hosted the Kho-Kho World Cup 2025 this year. This much-anticipated tournament was held from January 13 to 19, 2025, at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. To witness the excitement of the Kho-Kho World Cup, 80 children hailing from Delhi and Gurugram, participated in this event. When all the children from "Badhte Kadam" were taken to the stadium, their happiness knew no bounds. For many of them, it was the first time they were experiencing such a grand



sports event, and they were absolutely thrilled. As soon as the teams from England and Malaysia entered the stadium, the children

erupted in joy and were completely engrossed in the Kho-Kho match. When asked about her experience, Suman, a leader

from "Badhte Kadam," shared, "I really enjoyed watching the Kho-Kho match, and it was my first time seeing a stadium. The atmosphere in the stadium was amazing, and it was a matter of pride to watch the match among so many people."

Suman further added, "The discipline of both teams was remarkable! I didn't know before that a Kho-Kho team consists of 14 players, but today I learned that, and also that each team plays within seven minutes. Watching all of this made me very happy. Whenever a team won and drums and

trumpets played, all of us kids started dancing with joy." Sharing her experience, Suman also said, "I want to play Kho-Kho too. The way the teams from England and Malaysia played was incredible, and I loved their playing style. Outside the stadium, we also watched cultural dances, joined in, and had a lot of fun." Suman concluded by saying, "Playing sports helps in the development of the body and mind, so we should play every day. Today, we got this wonderful opportunity to visit the stadium thanks to Chetna organization, and we are extremely happy."

OPEN BASIC EDUCATION: A NEW PATH TO LEARNING FOR STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak,
Talkative Reporter: Sakshi

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited various slum areas in Jaipur to understand the experiences of children associated with Open Basic Education (OBE). These children shared that due to the lack of proper documents, they were unable to enroll in formal schools. However, with the support of the CHETNA organization, they were admitted to OBE programs based on their age. For the first time, they learned what Open Basic Education is, how classes are conducted, and the structure of examinations. Fourteen-year-old Pooja (name changed) shared, "I used to work making hand

fans, but now I'm studying in Class 8 under the Open Basic Education program. Preparing for exams was challenging, but CHETNA workers helped me practice regularly with test papers at the center. Now, I'm confident that I'll pass the exams." Nine-year-old Anshu said, "Initially, I thought I would never be able to study, but now I receive desk work, test papers, and guidance from teachers. I'm preparing for the Class 3 exam, and now I've started enjoying subjects like Math and Hindi." Twelve-year-old Archana shared, "I had never seen a school before, but now I find studying enjoyable. For the first time, I'm learning from books and working hard to



prepare for exams." For these children, studying through the OBE curriculum has been a journey full of challenges, but their experiences are truly inspiring. Currently, they are preparing for Class 3, 5, and 8 exams. CHETNA workers explained, "Children who couldn't enroll in regular schools due to their age or lack of documents have been linked to the Open Basic Education (OBE) program so

that they can receive formal education and shape their future. Free study materials have been provided to them, and special classes are being conducted. This initiative is a major opportunity for these children to connect with mainstream education. These children are highly enthusiastic about studying and are working hard despite the difficulties. Our aim is for them to become self-reliant and secure a brighter future. Through Open Basic Education, they are gaining the right to education, which will enable them to access better opportunities in the future. If such efforts continue, the overall education level in society can be significantly uplifted."

CHILDREN TAKE A NEW FLIGHT IN EDUCATION, HONORED AT SCHOOL ANNUAL FUNCTIONS

Balaknama Reporter Deepak,
Talkative Reporter Manish

Balaknama reporters visited various slum areas in Jaipur and interacted with street and working children who were enrolled in schools through CHETNA NGO alternative education centers. They aimed to understand these children's experiences. During the visit, it was learned that grand annual functions were recently organized in various government schools, where street and working children were given special recognition. These children, through their hard work and dedication, managed



to secure A grades in board exams, for which they were awarded certificates and mementos. Manish, a

student at the Government Higher Primary School in Ballabhpur, shared, "When I was honored

at the school's annual function, my confidence soared. When my name was announced on stage and the principal awarded me, I felt a deep sense of pride. This achievement was the result of my teachers' support and my own efforts. This moment will continue to inspire me to work harder and achieve new goals." Another student, Pawan, expressed, "When I was honored for good manners at the annual function, it was a moment of pride and joy for me. The school administration gifted me a special set of books and pencils. My parents were overjoyed, and I felt proud. I realized that good values

and etiquette not only make us better individuals but also bring pride to our parents and teachers. This honor will motivate me to maintain good behavior and discipline in the future."

The achievements of these children were applauded by teachers and parents present at the event. Additionally, the school administration encouraged the children to stay committed to their education and wished them a bright future. Dignitaries at the event remarked that the success of these children serves as an inspiration to society and highlights that positive change in their lives is possible through education.

STRUGGLES OF CHILDREN WITHOUT A FATHER

Talkative Reporter Mahira,
Balaknama Reporter Kishan

In every family, there is always one person who shoulders the household responsibilities—whether it's the mother, an elder sibling, or the father. When the breadwinner or the one taking responsibility is absent, the family's circumstances drastically change, leaving everyone to face immense challenges. Twelve-year-old Julie (name changed) shared her story: "When we lived in the village, my father used to work hard and send money home every month to cover our expenses on time. We attended a government school, and there was no worry about income. With



my father around, we could focus on our studies without any concerns. But one day, after a long conversation between my parents, my mother became upset and suddenly brought us to

Delhi. After some time, my father also joined us in Delhi and stayed with us for two months. However, one day, another argument broke out between my parents, and this time, my father left

us and went somewhere far away. Now, our situation is so dire that there is neither food in the house nor money to run the household. My mother started searching for work and eventually got

a job at a house, but she only earns ₹2,000 per month. The unfortunate part is that the rent for our room alone is ₹3,000. In such difficult circumstances, my younger brother, who is just 10 years old, has also started working at a grocery shop for two to three hours daily. My mother has now decided to work at a construction site as well to meet our expenses. I, too, am searching for work, but studies have completely stopped. Since we left the village, work has become a compulsion, and education is no longer an option. All we pray for is that my father, no matter what caused him to leave us, forgets everything and thinks about our future. If he returns to us, our lives could change completely."

GIRL FALLS INTO PIT WHILE TAKING CARE OF YOUNGER BROTHER, BREAKS HER ARM

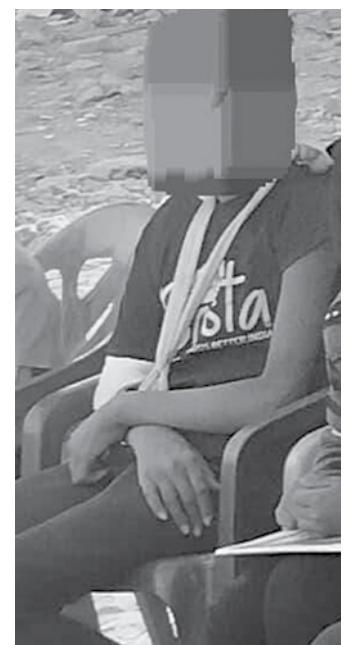
Talkative Reporter Tannu,
Balaknama Reporter Kishan

Who says mistakes only happen to young children? Mistakes can happen anytime, to anyone. In a settlement in Noida, while journalists were interacting with children, they noticed a girl who appeared sad. The journalists approached her and, upon observing her physical condition, saw that her arm was in a cast. Seeing

her sadness, they began a conversation and asked her about the reason for the cast. The girl explained that due to the abundance of slums in the settlement, there is no playground for children to play. As a result, children tie ropes or scarves to trees along the roadside to make swings and play on them. At the same time, they also have to take care of their younger siblings. Near the spot where the

swing was set up, there was an open drain filled with garbage, bricks, and stones. One day, while I was playing on the swing and had seated my younger brother near the tree, he suddenly started moving toward the drain. I quickly got off the swing to catch him. Just as I got off, another child sat on the swing. I was standing near the edge of the drain when that child, without looking, started swinging.

While swinging, her leg hit my back, causing me to lose balance and fall into the pit, landing on my arm. In the accident, my arm broke. The people around helped me up and took me to a nearby doctor. Then, my mother was called, and I was taken to a government hospital, where it was confirmed that my arm bone had fractured. This incident has left me very sad and troubled, and now I can't even play properly.



DONATIONS FOR SLUM CHILDREN: GENUINE HELP OR HIDDEN HARM?

Talkative Reporter Anjali,
Balaknama Reporter Kishan

Around many slums in Noida, tall buildings stand in stark contrast to the living conditions of the slum dwellers. Residents of these buildings often donate food, clothes, or educational items to the children living in the slums. But what kind of items are donated? How do the children use them? Are these items truly helpful, or do they cause more harm than good? Balaknama reporters visited a few slum areas in Greater Noida, surrounded by both under-construction and fully-built high-rise buildings. There, an 11-year-old girl, Dolly (name changed), expressed her frustration, saying, "Just because we live in slums doesn't mean anyone can give us anything, and we'll accept it happily. It's not necessary that everything donated is



appropriate. Our parents leave for work early in the morning, and people living in nearby buildings drop off things for us. Some of them are kind, but others treat us like we don't understand and leave behind bad or unusable items. I'm 11 years old and can tell good from bad, but smaller kids, aged 1 to 6 or 7, can't. They happily

accept anything, but it ends up harming their health." Dolly shared an incident: "One day, the younger kids in our slum were playing while we were busy with household chores. Suddenly, a group of people came and gave the children lollipops and snacks before leaving. The kids were thrilled and started eating. When we went to check what they'd been given, we found that the snacks were expired, and the lollipop wrappers were burnt and stained. Some kids had already started eating. When we saw this, we threw everything away. We were very angry and remain upset about it to this day." Through this report, we appeal to everyone: "Please do not donate bad or expired items to children living in slums. It adversely affects their health and makes them sick. If you truly want to help, donate good-quality and useful items."



GROWING FEAR AMONG CHILDREN: WILL THEY BECOME HOMELESS?

Bureau Report

A few months ago, you might have come across news or reels about a man climbing a tower in Noida Sector 78. However, following this incident, many residents, including children living in the slums nearby, faced numerous challenges. To gain deeper insights into this situation, Balaknama reporters visited the settlements in Sector 78 and spoke to the children living there. Neha (name changed), a 14-year-old girl residing in the slum, shared, "There are many people in this settlement who engage in all sorts of troubling behaviors, causing problems for everyone living here. A few months ago, when a man got drunk and climbed the tower, police and committee officials visited our settlement beforehand and warned us that the slum would soon be demolished and we would need to vacate the area. This news left many families scared. Some rented rooms in nearby areas, while others decided to stay, saying they'd deal with the situation when it actually happened." She continued, "Five or six days after the police left, another

man from our slum attempted to climb the tower while drunk. Thankfully, no major incident occurred. When people noticed him, they immediately informed the police. The police used several methods to bring him down, and after a long struggle, they succeeded. However, as soon as he came down, the police beat him and scolded all the slum residents, once again threatening us to vacate the area." Neha further explained that whenever a major incident occurs in the settlement, the so-called owner of the slum disappears. "No one knows where he goes. He is never seen in the area, yet he continues to sell land here to new people for one to one-and-a-half lakh rupees without any documentation. He also rents out huts and collects rent from people. But there is no certainty about when this settlement might be demolished. This uncertainty keeps all of us anxious day and night," she added. The children living in the slum shared their concerns, saying, "We've paid money to buy this land and have been living here for many years. Why are we being asked to vacate it now?"

EDUCATION WILL LIGHT UP MY FUTURE

Talkative Reporter Jasmin,
Balaknama Reporter Kishan

While Balaknama reporters were interacting with several children, a 15-year-old girl, Rosie (name changed), shared the story of another 11-year-old girl, saying, "Whenever I see this girl, it fills me with happiness." Curious about her story, the reporters approached the young girl to understand her life. The girl shared, "I am 11 years old. My family includes my parents, four sisters, and one brother. I am the fourth child in the family. My father works as a laborer, and my mother does domestic work in nearby homes. I also have a younger brother, the youngest in the family, and I take care of him too. Currently, I am studying in



the 5th grade and attend school regularly. I believe education is extremely important. It doesn't matter to me whether I study in a government or private school—I just know that I must study with full dedication. I love the Hindi subject because it's our mother tongue, and I pay extra attention to it. Every morning, I go to school at 9:00

AM and return by 2:30 PM. You might wonder who looks after my little brother during that time. Well, my mother leaves for work at 5:00 AM and returns home by 8:30 AM to care for him. When my siblings and I return from school, she leaves again at 3:00 PM for her second shift. We live in a rented slum house and manage our lives like this. I never skip school because I truly enjoy being there. In fact, I'm the monitor of my class. Staying at home doesn't feel as enjoyable as being in school, so I make it a point to attend every day. I only miss school if there's something very urgent or if I'm sick. Otherwise, I'm there every day. I want to study hard and improve my family's financial situation in the future."

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

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

Balaknama thanks Sardar Nagina Singh Ji & Family, HCL Foundation and Azim Premji Foundation for helping us in publishing our newsletter. You can also help us with publishing.

Balaknama is written originally in Hindi by children reporters. This is translated version of Hindi and translation assistance is taken from adults ensuring the original feel intact.