

# 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.

## STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN DETERMINED TO SUCCEED IN ANNUAL EXAMS

Balaknama Reporters: Kajal, Deepak, Rajkishore, Kishan

Hard work and self-confidence always yield results, sooner or later. Street and working children are also continuously striving towards education for a brighter future. Education is the light of life that dispels darkness and leads towards brightness. However, this journey is not easy for them. Despite various social and economic challenges, these streets and working children are studying with full dedication and hard work. Reporters from Balaknama visited settlements in Delhi, Noida, Gurugram and Jaipur to closely understand the exam preparations and struggles of these children. For street and working children in West Delhi, the annual exams are not just a test of knowledge but also a golden opportunity to give new direction to their self-confidence. Even in tough circumstances, these children are serious about education and working hard for their

future. This year, a total of 446 boys and girls from classes 2 to 9 are appearing for the exams, including 211 boys and 235 girls. Additionally, 9 students (5 boys and 4 girls) are appearing for the 10th-grade exams.

14-year-old Rubal (name changed), who lives in a settlement in Delhi, shared, "Not everyone understands the importance of education, but those who lack this privilege know its value well. In our community, most parents are not educated themselves and it's disheartening to see that they are unable to understand our school curriculum or help us with our studies. My parents want me to study, but I face a lot of difficulties in some subjects, especially English." Rubal further explained that when she faced challenges in her studies, she would feel disheartened. Often, she didn't know whom to ask for help since no one at home could assist her with her studies. However, when she joined the education center run by



the Chetna organization, her problems began to resolve. "Now, when I face difficulties in any subject, I go to Chetna's education center. The educators there help us with our studies, which boosts our confidence. Now, I understand English words better, I try to write new sentences, and I'm gradually improving in this subject."

Like Rubal, many other boys and girls in West Delhi

are moving towards education, preparing for their exams with full dedication, and facing every challenge head-on. Street and working children living in the slums of Jaipur are also fully committed to their exams. This year, a total of 430 children (215 boys and 215 girls) are appearing for exams here, including students studying through Open Basic Education (OBE). Recently, various government

schools in Jaipur organized annual functions where street and working children were specially honored. 14-year-old Manish, who studies at Govt School, shared, "When I was honored at the school's annual function, my confidence soared. When my name was called on stage and the principal honored me, I felt proud. This was the result of my teachers' support and my hard work. Now, I will continue to study with full dedication." Similarly, 11-year-old Pavan, who studies at a primary school in Vidhyadhar Nagar, Jaipur, shared, "I was specially honored at school for good manners. I received a set of books and pencils as a prize. My parents were very happy to see this honor. This taught me that good values and discipline are very important in life." This honor will continue to inspire me to maintain good behavior and discipline. Teachers and parents present at the event appreciated the children's achievements. Additionally, *cont. on pg. 2*

## CENTER FOR THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED BECOMES A BOON IN THE SLUM-A GIRL'S SMILE RESTORED AFTER RECEIVING A HEARING AID

Balaknama Reporters: Deepak, Rajkishor and Kishan

The Integrated Regional Skill Development, Rehabilitation, and Empowerment Center for the Differently-Abled, established by the government in Jaipur's Jamdoli slum, is emerging as a beacon of hope for the needy differently-abled individuals. Through this center, not only are people with disabilities finding solutions to their problems, but they are also being provided with essential medical services and assistive devices free of cost.

In this context, when Balaknama reporter Deepak met with 11-year-old Komal, he discovered a heartwarming story about her younger sister Neha (7 years old). Neha, who had been unable to hear since

birth, can now hear clearly. Coming from a financially weak family, Neha's mother could not afford treatment for her condition. Due to a lack of awareness and resources, the child's hearing impairment remained untreated for years.

However, when a CHETNA worker informed Neha's mother about this center, she decided to take Neha there. After conducting a thorough examination, the center's expert doctors determined that Neha had a limited ability to hear. The doctors recommended that providing her with a suitable hearing aid could improve her hearing capacity.

Following this advice, the center provided Neha with a hearing aid free of cost. The moment Neha heard sounds clearly for the first time, the

happiness on her face was priceless. Her family was overjoyed — Neha can now not only hear her family's conversations but is also gradually learning to speak. Other residents of the slum are also praising the center, calling it a "blessing for the differently-abled."

This center is not just offering health services but also playing a crucial role in empowering people with disabilities through skill development and rehabilitation, helping them become self-reliant. The local administration has also appreciated this initiative and expressed interest in expanding its reach to more needy individuals. The opening of this center in Jamdoli slum is providing differently-abled children and



adults with the opportunity to live a better life, thereby

promoting inclusivity and equality in society.



# A CHILDHOOD NAVIGATING THE PATH OF EDUCATION THROUGH STRUGGLES

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Chatty Reporter: Rohan

When Balaknama reporter Deepak visited Paldi Basti on Agra Road, Jaipur, he met 14-year-old Mohan (name changed). During the conversation, it became clear that Mohan is not only shouldering his family's financial responsibilities but also working tirelessly to fulfill his dreams.

Every day from 3:00 PM to 9:00 PM, Mohan works at Balaji Bhojnalaya where he serves tea to customers, washes dishes, and helps in cooking. In return, he earns ₹200 per day. However, once the night sets in, the same Mohan immerses himself in his books, determined to build a better future for himself. Mohan has two older brothers, but after getting married, they moved out of Jaipur and are now living with their respective families. They no longer contribute to the care of their parents. Mohan's father works as a laborer, but due to irregular work and low income, supporting the household has become challenging. On top of that, his mother is battling tuberculosis.

In such difficult circumstances, the burden



of supporting the family has fallen on Mohan's young shoulders. Despite facing the hardships of working at such a young age, Mohan has not let go of his dreams. He aspires to secure a government job and is making every possible effort to achieve this goal. He says, "No matter how tough the situation, if you have the courage, every challenge can be overcome. I am ready to face any obstacle to fulfill my dreams."

Mohan's determination reflects not only his personal struggle but also his unwavering hope, courage, and resolve. He stands as an inspiration to the millions of children who dare to chase their dreams even in the face of adversity.

# ON THE THRESHOLD OF RESETTLEMENT: A NEW HOME, BUT OLD SLUM LEFT BEHIND

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Chatty Reporter: Rohan

Resettlement is a significant issue. Millions of people migrate from one part of the country to another in search of employment, family support, and a better life. This is especially true for laborers and working-class families. Migration has long been one of the major challenges faced by slum communities. However, Balaknama reporter Deepak discovered a positive side to this change.

The Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) has allocated residential quarters near Kishanbagh, close to Bapu Basti, for some families from the Gujarati community. These families had applied for resettlement almost two years ago and are now being relocated to proper housing. Although the parents have not yet been informed whether they will need to pay rent for these homes, they have already shifted half of their belongings to the new quarters.

Six families from the slum have benefited from this resettlement. All of them had been living for years in cramped, rented rooms with limited facilities. The children's reactions are mixed — they are happy



about moving to better living conditions but sad about leaving behind their old friends in the slum.

Twelve-year-old Ranveer shared, "There's a forest nearby. We can't play outside at night because of strange sounds that scare us. But climbing the trees during the day is fun."

Budhia, a 29-year-old mother of three children who study at a government school near the slum, expressed her concern about the increased distance to the school. She worries that it will become difficult to drop off and pick up the children. However, the excitement of owning a home keeps her hopeful. Fourteen-year-old Koyal (name changed) said, "It feels nice to move into a new

house because we'll have two rooms of our own. But right now, there's no water or electricity, so we stay there during the day and return to the slum at night. Once water and electricity are set up, we'll stay there permanently." Currently, Koyal lives in a dark, rented room in the slum that costs ₹2,000 per month. She earns by bartering clothes for utensils in the local community. As she packed her belongings, her eyes reflected a mix of hope and sadness. "Memories come at a price," she whispered with a faint smile, giving one last glance at her old room.

The dream of a new beginning is alive, but the memories of the old slum streets remain close to the heart.

# STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN DETERMINED TO SUCCEED IN ANNUAL EXAMS

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the school administration motivated the children towards education and wished them a bright future. Dignitaries present at the occasion said that the success of these children is an inspiration for society and that education can bring positive changes in their lives.

For street and working children in Gurugram, the journey of education has not been easy, but their hard work and dedication have given them the strength to move forward. This year, a total of 389 children (215 boys and 174 girls) from classes 2 to 9 are appearing for exams here. Riya (name changed), a 10-year-old girl living in a settlement in Gurugram, has had a journey full of struggles. Her parents work as domestic helpers. She is in the 3rd grade and now appears confident. However, the situation was very different some time ago. Riya shared that she couldn't read Hindi earlier, but now she not only reads Hindi but has also learned the correct use of matras (vowel signs). Getting admitted to school was a big challenge for her. When she first went to school, her attendance wasn't

even recorded. Teachers often told her, "Your name isn't on the list, don't come here." This left her very disheartened. When her problem wasn't resolved, she went back to her village. After some time, when she returned, she tried to get admitted to school again, and this time her admission was done properly. Now, she goes to school every day and feels more confident than before. She shared that earlier she couldn't read English, but now she has started learning it too. She enjoys going to school and is excited about her future.

7-year-old Kulsum (name changed) has had a similar journey. She lives in a slum in Gurugram, where her father works as a gardener and her mother works as a cleaner. She is in the 2nd grade, but earlier she didn't like going to school. The reason was that she was weaker in studies compared to other children, and her classmates looked down on her. They didn't talk to her properly and avoided sitting with her. This situation weakened Kulsum's confidence, and gradually she stopped going to school. However, during this time, volunteers from the Chetna

organization contacted her and explained that education could improve her future. They encouraged her to come to their education center. Kulsum started regularly attending the center and gradually developed an interest in studies. Within a few months, she learned to read and now goes to school with full confidence. Earlier, she hesitated to talk to other children, but now she speaks openly. However, Kulsum highlighted another issue—her school's toilets and classrooms are often very dirty, which makes her uncomfortable at times. Despite this, she is now fully aware of the importance of education. "Now I'm in the 3rd grade and preparing to move to the 4th grade next year. My interest in studies has increased, and I'm excited about my future," she said proudly.

In Noida, a large number of children are appearing for annual exams this year. Here, a total of 446 children (211 boys and 235 girls) from classes 2 to 9 are appearing for exams. For these children, the exams are not just an academic process but also a test of their self-confidence and commitment to

their future. 14-year-old Naina (name changed), who lives in a settlement in Noida Sector 49, shared that a few years ago, she used to go to school regularly, but the environment there left her disheartened. The behavior of the teachers towards the children was often not appropriate. They didn't speak to the children properly and showed no interest in teaching. One day, when school uniforms were being distributed, they were treated disrespectfully. When she told her parents about this, they went to the school and tried to talk to the teacher. However, they were falsely accused. The teacher said that the children were lying and that no mistreatment had occurred. This left the girl and other children from her settlement very upset. Eventually, 10 children from the settlement left the school and withdrew their names from formal schooling. Now, she is studying in the 8th grade through Open Basic Education (OBE). She doesn't face many difficulties in studies because her elder brother is educated and helps her with her studies. She is happy that her family takes her education seriously

and motivates her to study daily. Currently, she is appearing for the 8th-grade exams and is committed to moving forward in life. 13-year-old Neha (name changed), who also lives in the same settlement, has a similar story. She shared that when exam time comes, she feels very scared about what will be in the question paper and how she will solve it. However, she has never given up and has faced every challenge head-on. She not only studies but is also learning beauty parlor work to improve her family's financial condition. However, sometimes her studies are affected due to the workload, but the didi (elder sister) at the beauty parlor fully supports her education. During exam time, they give her extra time so she can focus on her studies.

These children's stories prove that their dedication and hard work towards education are remarkable. Despite tough circumstances, they are making every possible effort to complete their education. Balaknama reporters Deepak, Rajkishor and Kishan listened to these children's stories and found them deeply committed to education.



# A TEENAGE JOURNEY OF LOST CHILDHOOD AND HEAVY RESPONSIBILITIES

**Talkative Reporter: Rahul**  
**Reporter: Kishan**

While Balaknama reporters were observing children's activities on the street, they noticed that most of the children were working under challenging conditions. Their attention was drawn to a 16-year-old boy, and they decided to approach him for a conversation.

The teenager shared his life story with them. "I am 16 years old and work as an e-rickshaw driver. I rent the e-rickshaw, which costs me ₹300 per day in rent and ₹100 for charging — a total of ₹400 every day. I

manage the charging within our own slum."

A few months ago, his mother fell seriously ill with a kidney stone problem, and the treatment required a significant amount of money. At that time, he was not working and stayed at home. His two older brothers, who work in Delhi, sent money for their mother's treatment.

Now that his mother's health has improved slightly, she is still unable to work, leaving him responsible for managing the household. His daily routine is exhausting. He leaves home with the e-rickshaw at 7:00 AM and



returns at 8:00 PM.

He takes a break in the

afternoon for one or two hours

to bathe, eat, and charge the

rickshaw's battery. However, his work is not easy. He shared, "When I park my rickshaw at the stand, many people scold me, thinking I am too young to drive. But I handle the rickshaw carefully and manage to earn ₹700–₹800 daily, which helps cover the household expenses."

This story is not just about one child — it reflects the harsh reality faced by thousands of children who are forced to shoulder heavy responsibilities at a young age. At an age when they should be playing and enjoying their childhood, they have no choice but to struggle for survival.



## YOUNG GIRL'S QUICK THINKING SAVED HER LIFE

**Talkative Reporter: Nazia**  
**Reporter: Kishan**

One day, while visiting a slum in West Delhi, Balaknama reporters met 7-year-old Mini (name changed). Her eyes reflected sadness and fear as she shared the terrifying incident she had experienced. Speaking in a soft voice, Mini said, "I live with my parents in a rented shanty. My parents leave early in the morning for work and return late in the evening. My siblings and I stay home alone during the day. I study in Class 3, but our neighborhood is not safe enough for us to feel comfortable going to school alone."

Recalling that frightening day, she said, "One morning at around 8:00 AM, I was on my way to school when I saw an old woman sitting by the side of the road. As I walked past her, she grabbed my hand and said she needed my help and asked me to come inside her house. I was scared and didn't know what would happen if I went inside. As the old woman tried to pull me inside, I showed courage and bit her hand hard. As soon as she let go, I ran as fast as I could and made it home safely." That

evening, when her mother returned from work, Mini narrated the whole incident to her. Out of fear, Mini stopped going to school for a few days. She was scared that if she took the same route, the old woman might try to grab her again. Mini later told her mother that similar incidents had happened to other children in the neighborhood too. However, her mother did not report the incident to the authorities. "A week later, when I returned to school, I shared the incident with my teacher. She taught me several ways to stay alert and safe," Mini said. When the reporters learned about the incident, they made Mini aware that children can directly call the 1098 Childline helpline if they feel unsafe or need help. They also advised her to remember the name of her district, tehsil, and local police station in case she needed to report an incident.

This incident is not just Mini's story—it reflects the reality of countless children living in unsafe environments. It highlights the importance of children being aware of their safety, staying vigilant, and seeking help immediately when needed.

## WAVE OF JOY AMONG CHILDREN AS FRESH WATER SUPPLY RESTORED IN THE SLUM

**Balaknama Reporter: Deepak**  
**Talkative Reporter: Sohini**

Balaknama reporter Sohini from Jaysinghpura Khor slum shared that their community had been struggling with a serious shortage of clean drinking water for a long time. Although the slum had a borewell, the water was salty and not suitable for drinking. As a result, residents were forced to purchase water from tankers every day, paying ₹10 per bucket. Amid rising inflation, this additional expense was a heavy burden for families already facing financial challenges. The shortage of drinking water made their daily lives even more difficult and stressful. However, the situation has now changed. The village head (Sarpanch) repeatedly raised this issue with the local administration and the municipal councillor, even filing written complaints. After years of struggle and continuous efforts, the problem was finally resolved



after four years — a moment that feels nothing less than a celebration for the slum's residents. With the combined efforts of local residents and social organizations, the government replaced the old pipeline and improved the water supply infrastructure. After the installation of the new pipeline, the residents are now receiving clean and fresh drinking water directly at their homes, sparking a wave of happiness throughout

the slum. Children expressed their relief, saying that fresh water is now available from their household taps, which means they no longer have to worry about buying water. Previously, they had to spend a lot of time collecting water for cooking and drinking, but now they can utilize this saved time for their studies.

The availability of clean water has not only made their lives easier but also paved the way for a brighter future.

## WHEN FIREWOOD BECOMES THE ONLY HOPE FOR SURVIVAL

**Talkative Reporter: Neelam**  
**Reporter: Kishan**

The saying "Where there's public, there's earning" holds true in the most unexpected ways. It took us some time to understand its real meaning when we, the Balaknama reporters, spoke with children living in the slums of Noida. We visited an area where more than 400 slum dwellings were tightly packed together. During our visit, we met 15-year-old Khushbu (name changed), who shared the harsh realities of her life. She

explained how living in a crowded slum provides both challenges and opportunities for survival. "Where more people live, there are more chances to earn," she said. About 500 meters from the slum lies a dense forest where both dry and wet firewood can be collected. For the children of the slum, this firewood is invaluable — it fuels their stoves, cooks their meals, and, for some families, serves as a source of income.

Many families use this firewood to make fritters (pakoras) which they sell

within the slum. Selling 250 grams of pakoras earns them around ₹30 — a small but crucial income that helps them meet daily needs. Khushbu shared, "If we don't find firewood, it becomes difficult to cook, and sometimes we have to sleep hungry." This is why many children from the slum go into the forest every day to gather wood, ensuring that their families can cook meals and survive. For these children, firewood is not just fuel — it's a means of survival. It represents the thin line between having a meal and going to bed hungry.



# A DREAM FOR EDUCATION FLOURISHING AMIDST SCRAP

Talkative Reporter: Ankit  
Reporter: Kishan

Life itself is a test. When we face challenges, it is often said that God is testing us. But if we reflect deeply, we realize that every day and every situation teaches us something valuable. During their field visit, Balaknama reporters saw many children returning home happily after their exams. While speaking with the children, 13-year-old Fatima (name changed) shared her inspiring story. "I am from Bihar, but I currently live with my parents in a slum in West Delhi. My parents

work as rag pickers, sorting and collecting scrap, and I help them too. However, I also go to school every day and am currently appearing for my 7th-grade exams," Fatima shared confidently. Her father leaves early in the morning to collect scrap and returns home by afternoon. After coming back from school, Fatima helps her parents sort the scrap while also taking care of her younger brother. Fatima's confidence was striking. She continued, "Many children in our slum balance work and school just like me. I find English and Maths difficult, but I don't give up. I ask my



teacher questions at school, and if I face any problems while studying at home, I go to CHETNA's Education Club for help. The staff there

patiently help me understand difficult concepts, which improves my learning." Her attitude towards exams was truly inspiring. She proudly

said, "I am not scared when I take exams. I answer the questions carefully and try to solve the ones I don't understand by asking my teacher. I trust my hard work and believe that fear is for those who don't focus on their education."

Fatima's parents also prioritize her studies during exams and do not involve her in household chores, which makes her feel more supported and motivated.

Fatima's story reflects the resilience and determination of children who dare to dream of education despite difficult circumstances.

## LIFE OF FEAR AND HELPLESSNESS IN A SLUM ALONG THE RAILWAY TRACKS



Bureau Report

In a slum near the railway tracks in West Delhi, life is defined by fear and helplessness. When a team of Balaknama reporters visited the area to assess the situation, they noticed a group of people sitting near the railway tracks. These individuals appeared intoxicated, and their behavior seemed suspicious. At first, the reporters couldn't understand the situation, but after speaking with a 14-year-old boy named John (name changed), a shocking reality came to light. John revealed, "You must

have seen those drug addicts sitting near the railway tracks. This is their regular spot. They wait for someone to pass by—whether it's a man, woman, or a young girl—so they can rob them and survive another day." All the slum dwellers, including children, women, and men, have to use the path along the railway tracks to go to the market or school. But the drug addicts lurking on this route have become a constant threat to everyone's safety. There is a lingering fear among the residents because these addicts often target passersby, snatching

their money, phones, and valuables. If someone resists or refuses to hand over their belongings, the addicts threaten them with knives, blades, or other weapons—and sometimes even attack them. Several incidents of robbery have already taken place in the slum. People have been stripped of their phones and money, and although some victims have been able to identify the culprits, reporting the crimes doesn't always lead to justice. In some cases, local efforts have led to the recovery of stolen items. However, most cases remain unresolved. Even when victims report incidents to the police, the criminals are often released within three to four days. Worse still, the released criminals often retaliate by threatening or assaulting the victims and their families for filing complaints. The slum residents are forced to live under constant fear, with no effective security measures in place to protect them. The unchecked presence of drug addicts has turned everyday life into a constant struggle for safety and survival.

## CHILDREN BEARING HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE COST OF THEIR CHILDHOOD

Balaknama Reporter: Saberul  
Talkative Reporter: Sumit

Child labor remains a deep-rooted social problem that not only darkens the future of children but also seriously impacts their physical and mental development. This issue holds back societal progress and forces innocent childhoods into the grip of hardship and struggle.

The situation in Wazirabad is no different. Many children here are forced to abandon their education to engage in rag-picking, working at general stores, dhabas (roadside eateries), and other small jobs. The financial condition of their families is so fragile that parents often prefer sending their children to work rather than to school. The belief is that earning money to support the household is more important than gaining an education.

But who will make them understand that if these children receive proper education, their future can be far more secure and prosperous? Several government and non-government organizations are working to eliminate child labor and connect children with education. Various schemes and resources, such as free education, mid-day meals, and other essential supplies, are



being provided in government schools to ensure that no child is deprived of education due to poverty.

However, this problem will persist until parents and society as a whole recognize the severity of the issue and commit to sending children to school instead of work. The mentality that child labor is a solution to financial struggles must change. Awareness must be spread that child labor is not only a violation of children's rights but also a legal offense. If we can free children from the burden of labor and place them on the path of education, not only will their lives improve, but our society will also move toward a brighter future.

## DISTANCE TO SCHOOL BECOMES A BARRIER TO A GIRL'S EDUCATION, BUT HER DETERMINATION STAYS STRONG

Talkative Reporter: Mastara  
Reporter: Kishan

Recently, during a visit to some slums in Noida, Balaknama reporters interacted with children to understand whether they were attending school or not. During this visit, they spoke with 8-year-old Nupur (name changed), who shared the challenges she faces in accessing education. Nupur lives with her family in a rented shanty and is currently

unable to attend school. Her school is approximately 1.5 kilometers away from her home, and going there alone is difficult and risky for her. The road leading to the school is busy with large vehicles, making it dangerous for a young child to cross. She shared, "Earlier, a 14-year-old 'didi' (elder sister) from our slum used to accompany me to school. She would hold my hand and help me cross the road, so I never felt scared. But



now she has moved to another place, and I have no one to go with." Her parents leave for work at around 7 a.m., which adds to her difficulty in getting to school safely. However, not being able to attend school hasn't stopped Nupur from pursuing her education. She now studies regularly in CHETNA's Nanhe Parinde van, where she is taught the same subjects she would have studied at school.

Nupur has also shared this with her parents, who have assured her that they will try to enroll her in a nearby school soon. Nupur's resilience and determination to continue learning despite the challenges reflect her strong spirit. Her story highlights the importance of accessible and safe education for all children, especially those from marginalized communities.



# DEMOLITION ORDERS THREATEN HOMELESSNESS FOR STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN

**Balaknama Reporter: Saberul**  
**Talkative Reporter: Azharul**

In Gurugram's Saraswati Kunj, Sector 52, demolition orders for street and working children's homes and buildings have caused deep anxiety and unrest among the families and school-going children living there. This decision has brought a severe crisis for the vulnerable families in the area. The land and the buildings constructed on it are owned by different parties. However, the

landowner has now decided to demolish the structures. Many working children and their families live in these homes, facing the immediate threat of losing their shelter. Expressing his concern, Azharul, a resident of the slum, said: "This is a huge problem for us. A boundary wall has been built around the area, making it difficult for us to go to school. Our families are extremely disturbed by this situation. If we are forced to leave, where will we go?" Many other working



children and their families share the same fear. They are living under constant stress, knowing that they might

be evicted at any moment, leaving them without a roof over their heads. Children who are already struggling

with financial hardships and forced to work to support their families are now facing the added fear of becoming homeless. Several families have also stated that they work in the nearby area, and if they are removed from their homes, their livelihood will be severely affected. The future remains uncertain as the community awaits to see whether the administration and the residents can reach a resolution that ensures their right to shelter and stability.

# MAHIMA'S DETERMINED STEPS TOWARDS EDUCATION

**Talkative Reporter: Mahima**  
**Balaknama reporter: Ritika**

While visiting the Chakkarpur village slum in Gurugram, Balaknama journalist Ritika met 12-year-old Mahima. Originally from a small village in Uttar Pradesh, Mahima had to give up her education due to family responsibilities. Mahima's mother works in houses from 6 AM to 2 PM and then again from 3 PM to 5 PM, while her father works at a mall. This leaves Mahima responsible for taking care of



her younger sister. Although she completed her education up to the 5th grade in her village, her circumstances forced her to quit school. When Ritika asked Mahima about her education, she responded innocently that she wants to study but her family responsibilities prevent her from doing so. When Ritika asked, "If given a chance, would you like to go back to school?" Mahima's eyes lit up with excitement. She eagerly said, "Yes, I want to study! My brothers go to school, and it

makes me happy to see them learning. I want to study too." Ritika told Mahima about Chetna's education center and explained that she could start studying there. Hearing this, Mahima smiled brightly and said, "Okay, Didi, once my brothers return from school and can take care of my younger sister, I will also come to study!" Hope sparkled in Mahima's eyes. She was happy to know that she now has a chance to pursue her dreams and take a step toward a better future.

# FEAR LOOMING OVER CHILDHOOD CHILDREN STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE IN THE MARKET



**Bureau Report**

This is the story of a 15-year-old boy who faces daily struggles while working hard to support his family. Like him, many children across villages, neighborhoods, and markets are forced into labor under difficult circumstances. However, his experience reflects a deeper, more concerning reality of exploitation and fear. The boy wakes up every morning at 5 a.m. to buy fruits from the market and returns home by 8 a.m. In the evening, he

sets out at 4 p.m. to sell the fruits. But the market where he works has turned into a dangerous zone for him and other children. He shared, "In the market, 15 to 17-year-old boys and even older people secretly sell marijuana. Most people don't come to buy fruits, vegetables, or clothes — they come for these illegal drug deals." The illegal drug trade happens openly in the forested area adjacent to the market. The drug dealers wear masks to hide their identities and avoid getting caught.

Even when the police conduct raids, most of the offenders manage to escape, while only a few are caught. Unfortunately, the children working in the market face the most trouble during these raids. The boy shared, "Whenever the police come to the market, they start searching the stalls of all the children aged between 10 and 17. They assume that some of the minors might be involved in the drug trade." The boy revealed that the police often harass them during searches, sometimes using threats and abusive language. He said, "If we resist or speak up, they get angry and throw our fruits and belongings to the ground. We work hard to earn a living, but still have to face this kind of humiliation." This situation is alarming. On one hand, these children are trying to build a better future through hard work. On the other hand, they are forced to live in constant fear of exploitation and harassment. Is it too much to ask for a safe and dignified life for these children?

# CHILDREN RAISED AWARENESS ON POCSO THROUGH SONG AT IIT DELHI

**Talkative Reporter: Insha**

Children from the Badshahpur community in Gurugram took a creative approach to raise awareness about the POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. A group of 10 children came together to present a special song that not only explained the POCSO Act but also highlighted its significance and the protection it provides to children. The children explained that the POCSO Act is a law designed to protect children under the age of 18 from sexual abuse and exploitation. Through the song, they aimed to educate other children and the community about their rights and the importance of reporting any form of abuse. The performance stressed that if any child experiences inappropriate behavior, obscene exposure, or harassment, they should immediately report it to the police without fear. The children emphasized that under the POCSO Act, offenders face strict punishment, and the identity of the reporting child is kept completely confidential to protect them from any pressure or harm. They performed a powerful song titled "Kya Hai POCSO, Suno Ye Baat" (What is POCSO, Listen to This) that effectively conveyed the message of child safety and rights. During their visit to IIT Delhi, the children explored the campus with great excitement. Various organizations also organized engaging games for the children. Two children from the Badshahpur community participated in these games and even won prizes. Expressing his happiness, one child said, "I feel really proud to have won this prize, and this visit taught me how much hard work and dedication it takes to be here." This initiative not only raised awareness about child protection laws but also boosted the children's confidence and courage to speak up about their rights and safety.



# STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN TROUBLED BY STRAY DOG ATTACKS



Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor  
Talkative Reporter: Ajirul

Balaknama reporter Ajirul from the Wazirabad slum in Gurugram has highlighted a serious issue affecting children in the area — the growing menace of stray dogs. Many children live in constant fear and anxiety due to the presence of two to three aggressive stray dogs that roam the neighborhood. Ajirul shared that when

children go to play in nearby parks or open grounds, these dogs often start fighting among themselves and then suddenly charge toward the children, trying to bite them. A child recounted his traumatic experience, saying, "One day, while I was playing with my friends, a mad dog came running toward me and bit me. I ran home crying and told my parents. Even though we didn't have enough money, my parents borrowed money to

get me treated and vaccinated. I was terrified of the injection and cried a lot."

The children explained that because of the stray dogs, they feel unsafe going out alone. Although the aggressive dogs haven't been seen for the past two to three days, the children believe that someone may have called the dog rescue team to catch them. However, many stray dogs still roam the streets and bark aggressively at passersby, especially children. Children have requested that dog owners should keep their pets tied up or supervised. Stray dogs often target children carrying bags or sacks, which makes it difficult for rag-picking children to move freely through the area. Ajirul and his friends hope that this issue reaches the authorities and those who can help resolve it so that children can play fearlessly and live without constant fear.

## UNABLE TO HEAR OR SPEAK... BUT DESTINED TO WIN!

Talkative Reporter Reshma  
Reporter Kishan

It is true that someone's weakness can become their biggest challenge — but that same weakness can also drive them toward remarkable success. Many children around us cannot hear or speak, yet they continue to chase their dreams with determination and courage.

This inspiring story comes from a slum in West Delhi, where 16-year-old Jyoti (name changed) shared the incredible journey of her 13-year-old classmate Neelam (name changed). Neelam, who is in 8th grade, cannot hear or speak.

Despite her physical

limitations, she has set an example for others through her extraordinary talent. During the school's annual sports competitions, teachers and classmates doubted whether Neelam would be able to participate, let alone succeed. Other students struggled to keep up in games like kabaddi, kho-kho, and badminton. However, Neelam, whom no one expected to perform well, surprised everyone with her exceptional skills.

She participated in the badminton competition and displayed outstanding performance, securing first place and bringing pride to her school. Neelam's achievement filled her teachers, classmates,

and the entire school with pride and admiration. Earlier, her classmates viewed her physical disability as a limitation and often overlooked her during group activities and competitions. But after her remarkable victory, their perception changed completely. Her success became a source of motivation for others, showing that physical challenges do not define one's capabilities.

To honor her achievement, the school awarded Neelam a three-day educational trip. This incident teaches us that what seems like a weakness can become a strength — all it takes is the right opportunity and unwavering confidence!

## THREAT TO CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Talkative Reporter: Komal

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited the Kachchi Basti Kali Ka Bhatta in Jaipur, where he saw children crossing an open drain on their way. Concerned, he asked them, "Is there no other way to reach your settlement? Aren't you afraid of crossing such a dangerous path?"

In response, 10-year-old Komal explained that many children have no choice but to take this risky route, which involves walking over a water-filled drain. During the rainy season, the problem worsens as the water level rises, making the path extremely slippery. "Many children have narrowly escaped falling, while some have suffered injuries," she said.



Although this is the shortest route to school, its hazardous condition discourages many children from attending. If they take an alternative path, they have to walk a much longer distance, which consumes both time and energy. Due to safety concerns, many parents have also reduced sending

their children to school. Despite repeated appeals to local authorities and representatives, no concrete solution has been implemented. If a proper arrangement is not made soon, children's safety will remain at serious risk, and their education will continue to suffer.

## WILL NAVEEN BE ABLE TO FULFILL HIS DREAMS WITHOUT HIS PARENTS?

Talkative Reporter: Praveen  
Reporter: Khushboo

During a visit to the community near Emaar Tower in Gurugram's Badshahpur, Balaknama reporter Khushboo shared the heart-wrenching story of 11-year-old Naveen (name changed). Naveen revealed, "My mother had been ill for several years and eventually passed away. My father was addicted to alcohol, and after my mother's death, he abandoned me. Since then, my grandfather has been taking care of me." Naveen's voice reflected a deep sense of helplessness as he continued, "My grandfather is very poor. He barely manages to cover our household expenses, so paying for my education is impossible. I want to go to school and study like other children, but our situation makes it difficult."

Naveen's grandfather sometimes finds temporary labor work, but the lack of a stable source of income prevents him from enrolling Naveen in school. The child's vulnerable situation deeply moved the Balaknama team. When the reporters informed Naveen about CHETNA NGO and how it helps street and working children



access education and secure admission to government schools, a spark of hope lit up in his eyes.

Upon hearing about this opportunity, Naveen's face brightened with excitement. He immediately expressed his willingness to join the CHETNA program. Khushboo, who reported Naveen's story, said, "I felt heartbroken seeing Naveen's condition, but now I'm relieved that he will have a chance to fulfill his dreams through education."

Now, Naveen is part of the CHETNA program and will soon be enrolled in a government school in Badshahpur. This step will bring him closer to realizing his dream of receiving an education and building a better future.



## CHILDREN FALLING SICK DUE TO DUST POLLUTION

Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor,  
Gurugram Talkative Reporter:  
Sonu Kumar, Gurugram

When Balaknama reporter Rajkishor visited the JMD slums in Gurugram, a serious issue came to light during his conversation with the local children. The children revealed that the area is severely affected by dust pollution due to nearby construction and gravel work. Large and small vehicles pass through the area constantly, stirring up dust that spreads throughout the neighborhood. The children shared their distress, saying, "There's so much dust in the air that we have trouble breathing. Our chests feel tight, and we often have difficulty breathing. We can't even play properly because the dust is everywhere, making it hard to stay outside."

Reporter Rajkishor personally visited the affected area and confirmed the severity of the problem after speaking with the local residents and children. A local resident shared, "The dust is so intense that it enters our homes and ruins everything inside. Allergies and respiratory problems have increased among children and elderly people, but no one seems to be taking any action." The issue is not only affecting the children but also the adults and senior citizens in the area. Despite the worsening health issues and reduced quality of life, no action has been taken to resolve the problem. The children and their families are now hoping that their voices will finally be heard and that the authorities will step in to address the situation before it gets worse.



# LACK OF SAFETY PUTS CHILDREN'S LIVES AT RISK

Talkative Reporter  
Balaknama Reporter

This is the story of Ankit (name changed), a 9-year-old boy living in the Shaheed Camp slums of Delhi for the past year. Ankit, currently studying in Class 4, was admitted to school in April 2024 with the support of CHETNA NGO. Since his enrollment, he has been attending school regularly and also studying at CHETNA's learning center. One afternoon, when school was closed, Ankit was playing with his younger brother near a large open drain close to their house. While playing, the ball accidentally bounced into the drain. Without thinking much, Ankit moved toward the drain to retrieve the ball. As he reached out, his foot slipped, and he fell



straight into the muddy drain. There was no one nearby to help him. His younger brother stood at the edge, watching helplessly as Ankit struggled to get out. The

drain was deep, and Ankit began sinking into the mud. Panicked and scared, he tried to scream for help, but his voice didn't come out. Just when it seemed hopeless,

Ankit noticed a hanging wire along the wall of the drain. Summoning all his strength, he stretched his arm toward the wire. After several desperate attempts,

his hand finally reached the wire, and he gripped it tightly. Slowly, using every ounce of his strength, Ankit pulled himself up. As he managed to climb out, a group of boys nearby saw him and immediately called his mother. He was taken home and cleaned up, and only then did everyone breathe a sigh of relief.

This incident highlights a serious safety concern — the open drain at Shaheed Camp has no protective barriers or covering. Such accidents are common, with children frequently slipping and getting injured. The absence of proper safety measures continues to put the lives of vulnerable children at risk. The question remains — how long will children's safety be overlooked?

# TRANSFORMATION IN A GIRL'S LIFE WITH SUPPORT FROM CHETNA NGO

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak  
Talkative Reporter: Poonam

Balaknama reporter Deepak recently visited the Mangyawas slum in Jaipur to understand the challenges faced by street-connected and working children. During this visit, he met Poonam, an 11-year-old girl, who shared her inspiring journey of change and empowerment. Poonam recalled that around three years ago, she used to accompany her mother and brothers to collect scrap for survival. Her father worked as an auto driver, but his addiction to alcohol created a stressful environment at home. Frequent fights and financial instability meant that the family often went to



bed hungry. Although government schools offered free

education, Poonam couldn't get admission due to incomplete documentation.

As a result, most of her time was spent working and managing household chores, keeping her far from the world of education. Her future seemed uncertain and bleak. However, things started to change when she heard about Chetna NGO's education center. She began attending the center regularly and actively participated in meetings and activities. Through life skills workshops, Poonam learned about problem-solving, decision-making, and her legal rights. The workshops inspired her to take charge of her life and build a better future through education. With Chetna NGO's assistance, Poonam finally secured admission to a government school. She

expressed her gratitude by saying, "This change became possible because of Chetna NGO. They not only guided me toward education but also helped me become more self-reliant and confident." Poonam's growing interest and dedication toward her studies encouraged her mother to stop taking her to work. Now, her family prioritizes her education and supports her in achieving her dreams. Poonam's story stands as proof that the right guidance and access to education can transform lives. Chetna NGO not only helped her secure her right to education but also empowered her to become independent and confident in shaping her own future.

# INNOCENT CHILD FORCED INTO LABOR TO SUPPORT FAMILY

Balaknama Reporter: Damini

Balaknama reporter Damini recently visited various slum settlements in Jaipur. During her visit to the Jaisinghpura Khor settlement, she witnessed the struggles of an 8-year-old boy, Manu (name changed), who is battling life's harsh realities while trying to support his family.

When Damini visited the settlement, she saw Manu selling poha on the roadside. In their conversation, Manu shared, "We don't have enough money. My mother makes dolls and sells them, and my elder sister Riya helps her. Sometimes the dolls sell for a good price, but other

times, we return empty-handed. In such a situation, it becomes difficult to manage household expenses. So, my mother prepares poha for me to sell."

Manu sells a plate of poha for ₹5 and earns around ₹40 to ₹50 daily. He gives all the money to his mother to help meet the family's needs.

When the reporter asked about his education, Manu's voice reflected unspoken pain.

He revealed that he was once enrolled in school but could not attend regularly. If he went to school, he would not be able to sell poha, making it even harder to



sustain the household. Due to these challenges, his mother pulled him out of school.

However, Manu has not given up on his dreams.

He said, "I want to get enrolled in school again. I want to study well and secure a good job so that I can support my family."

Manu's story is not just about struggle—it reflects the reality of millions of children who, despite hardships, continue to hold on to their dreams. It is also a message to those children who, instead of giving up in the face of adversity, keep striving to move forward.

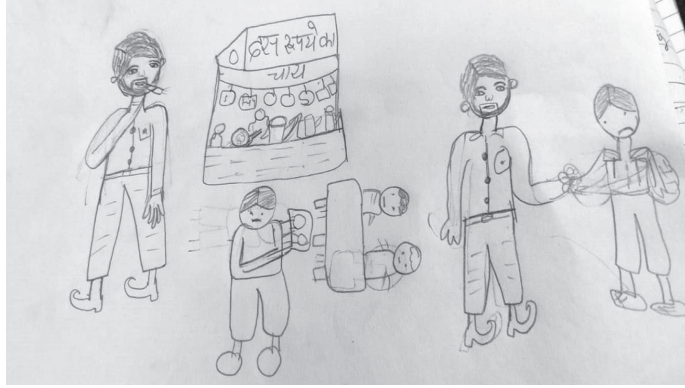


# WHEN DREAMS ARE CRUSHED BY THEIR OWN FAMILY

Reporter: Sufiyan Shamshad Khan

In the Zakhira Rakhi Market community of West Delhi, many children dream of going to school and building a better future, but the biggest barrier often comes from their own families.

This is the story of Raju (name changed), a 12-year-old boy who lives with his father in the slums of Zakhira. Raju lost his mother at a young age, leaving only his father as his guardian. Despite his difficult circumstances, Raju had a simple yet powerful dream — to go to school and create a better life for himself.



One day, mustering up all his courage, Raju said to his father, "Papa, I want to go to school too. I want to study and do something good with my life." But instead of support, his father responded with

anger, "You don't need to go to school. Stay at home and work."

Raju was heartbroken but determined. He insisted, "No, Papa, I want to go to school like the other kids!" His

persistence only fueled his father's rage. In a fit of anger, his father beat him badly and locked him in a room.

But Raju didn't give up. He continued to plead for a chance to study. Finally, his father's patience ran out. In a cold and harsh tone, he declared, "You will never go to school. From now on, you will work!"

Soon after, Raju was forced to work at a local shop. He would leave home at 9 AM and return exhausted at 9 PM every day. His hard-earned wages were taken away by his father, who used them to buy alcohol and cigarettes. Raju was left with no proper food

or care. Whenever he asked for food or money, his father would beat him mercilessly.

Despite the harsh treatment, Raju's eyes still carry the spark of a dream — the dream to study and lead a better life. But his father's control over his life continues to stand in the way.

Raju's story reflects the harsh reality of many children whose right to education is denied by the very people meant to protect and support them. The question remains — will Raju's dreams remain unfulfilled forever, or will someone help him break free and claim his right to education and a better future?

## CHILDREN FALLING SICK DUE TO THE STENCH FROM GARBAGE HEAPS

Balaknama Reporter: Damini Talkative Reporter: Siya

Balaknama journalists, while traveling through various states and locations, closely observed the filth and heaps of garbage in the settlements of street and working children. In most of these settlements, the stench and dirt were so overwhelming that the children living there had to endure it daily. Suman (name changed), a 13-year-old girl from a settlement in

Noida, shared her experience in detail. She explained that around 150 or more shanties exist in her area, and garbage piles up around them—often dumped by the settlement's residents themselves. "It becomes difficult to walk on the roads; the stench is so unbearable that it is hard to tolerate. Because of this, many children in the settlement are falling sick. Not only that, apart from household waste, people also throw dirty water and leftover



food into these garbage heaps," she said. Many times, residents have demanded that the settlement's contractor arrange for cleaning, but each time, they only received assurances. The contractor talks about cleaning but never takes concrete action. The pain of the children living in these conditions is clearly visible in their eyes, highlighting a problem that not only affects their health but also raises concerns about their future.

## CHILDREN OF THE SLUM TROUBLED BY PICKPOCKETS' ACTIVITIES



Bureau Report

Despite being the capital city, Delhi continues to grapple with incidents of theft and robbery carried out by anti-social elements. Snatching incidents involving both children and adults occur in broad daylight, raising the question—are there no people or police present at the time of these crimes? To understand this serious issue, we visited the affected area and spoke to children who shared their experiences with Balaknama. Fifteen-year-old Nisha (name changed), a resident of the settlement, narrated the situation. She

explained that their slum is located near railway tracks, where a train passes every five minutes. However, sometimes trains remain stationary for hours, and no one knows when they will move again. There are several open fields near the tracks where groups of intoxicated individuals gather. These individuals, often under the influence of drugs, pose a constant threat to passersby. Both children and adults fear crossing the railway tracks, as these criminals can attack at any moment. The biggest danger arises when someone is stuck between the tracks with trains approaching from both

directions. In such situations, these criminals seize the opportunity to snatch mobile phones, money, or anything they can find. If anyone resists, they use sharp weapons like blades to threaten or harm them. Local residents revealed that while some criminals manage to escape, others are sometimes caught. However, their gang members often come to their aid, helping them evade the authorities. Even when the police manage to apprehend them, these criminals use their connections to secure their release. The children also highlighted another problem—the long-standing trains on the tracks cause significant difficulties. Many times, while trying to cross the railway line, the train suddenly starts moving, leading to accidents. Some children have narrowly escaped such incidents, while others have tragically lost their lives. This is a critical situation that demands immediate intervention from the authorities to ensure the safety of children and the general public.

## Salute to the wisdom of the child

बातूनी रिपोर्टर चंदन व रिपोर्टर काजल

Journalists organized a meeting with children in some slums of Jaipur. The children of the slum participated in this meeting in large numbers and shared their problems and experiences. One child, while describing his situation, said, "There is an 11-year-old child in our slum, whose mother has passed away. His father is present, but he works as a maid. This child works in a hotel washing dishes and cleaning. He leaves for work at 6 in the morning and returns home at 11 in the night. He earns Rs. 6000 a month, and he gives this money to his father, which runs the household expenses. But one happy thing is that he does not have to cook food at home at night, because he brings food for himself and his father from the hotel every day." The child further told that sometimes his father misuses that money, like spending it on gambling and alcohol. He feels very sad to see this, but he has no one else who can understand him. He also told that when his father is conscious, he treats him well, but when he comes



home after drinking and gambling, he beats him in anger and throws him out of the house at night. He goes to the place where his father works at night and spends the whole night there. When the father regains consciousness, he repents his mistake and apologizes to the child. The child said, "I have no one in this world except my father. Whatever my father is, he is right for me. If not today, then tomorrow, he will understand everything."

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