

BALAKNAMA

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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.

On International Street Children's Day

CHILDREN CELEBRATED RIGHTS, PARTICIPATION, AND LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE 'STREET CHAMPS' TOURNAMENT

Report by Balaknama
Reporter, Kishan

Every year, April 12 is observed as International Street Children's Day, dedicated to raising awareness about the rights of street-connected children and promoting their participation and leadership. This year, to mark the occasion, Chetna organization organized a special sports festival titled 'Street Champs', in which over 500 children participated.

The event was held at Vinod Nagar ground in East Delhi and was centered around traditional Indian sports, offering children a platform to showcase their talents and develop leadership through games like Kabaddi and Kho-Kho. Children not only chose their team names and formed strategies but also played key roles in team leadership, understanding the rules, and making decisions.

The event did more than just offer a chance to play — it gave the children a platform to experience core values such as leadership, communication, collective decision-making, self-expression, teamwork, and equality. The main



objective of this event was to promote children's participation and decision-making abilities, echoing this year's international theme: "Participation and Decision-Making for Children."

Children from cities like West Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida, Jaipur, and Gurugram took part. Teams such as "Dhoom," "Chhupa Rustam," "Gully Smart," "Panther," "Udaan," and "Avengers"

showcased their energy and spirit on the field. Both boys and girls, from junior and senior groups, participated equally, without any gender bias. Each team got to play twice, which helped boost their confidence and sportsmanship.

When the children reached the finals and won through their hard work and unity, the victory was not just in the game—it

was also a win for their confidence, independence, and leadership.

Child reporters present on the field also made their voices heard by reporting on the event and sharing the experiences of participants with the world. Children like Shahid, Saniya, Aslam, Dilip, and Ram shared how participating in the event, leading their teams, and achieving this milestone

became their first big victory in life. Many said it was their first time playing a game, and they considered their team's win the biggest achievement of their lives so far.

The program concluded with the winning teams being awarded trophies and medals. The warm welcome with drums, the creative and motivating team names, and the sparkle in the children's eyes made it clear — this event was not just a sports day, but a celebration of confidence and equality. During the sports festival organized on this occasion, a special comic book titled "Chhotu and Shera: Protectors of Child Rights" was launched. This comic has been designed keeping in mind the needs of street-connected and working children, so that they can understand their rights in a simple and engaging manner. It is often observed that books that reach younger children are filled with complex language and difficult words, making them hard to comprehend. Addressing this challenge, "Chhotu and Shera" was created. The book presents children's rights, child

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CHILDREN STRUGGLING AMIDST FILTH AND STENCH- WHEN WILL THEY GET A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT?

Talkative Reporter Ali &
Reporter Kishan

During their visits to different states and locations, Balaknama reporters observed large piles of garbage and waste near settlements where street and working children live. Most of these areas were filled with such unbearable stench that children are forced to face it every single day. Neha (name changed), a 13-year-old girl from a settlement in Noida, spoke in detail about this problem. She said, "Where we live, there are more than



150 huts, and huge heaps of garbage collect in front of

them. This garbage is thrown by the residents themselves."

She further explained that due to this waste, it

becomes difficult to even walk through the lanes. The smell is constant and strong, and as a result, many children in the settlement are falling sick. People also throw dirty water and leftover food into these garbage heaps, which worsens the situation.

The residents have repeatedly requested the local contractor to arrange for cleaning, but he only gives verbal assurances and takes no action. Because of this negligence, the children in the settlement are forced to live in these unsanitary and hazardous conditions.

CHILDREN FROM THE SETTLEMENT CELEBRATE HOLI WITH THE POLICE

Balaknama Reporter Damini
Talkative Reporter- Sakshi

Balaknama reporter Damini visited the Jaysinghpura Khor settlement in Jaipur to learn about the experiences of local children during the Holi festival. Chatty reporter Sakshi shared with excitement that Holi has become a symbol of new and unique joy for the children of the settlement. This year, for the very first time, they celebrated the festival by visiting the nearby police station and playing Holi with the police officers. Initially, the children were hesitant. They weren't sure if it

would be appropriate to apply color or gulal to the police. But gathering courage, they went to the police station and asked the officers if they could celebrate Holi together.

To their surprise, the officers were delighted. Taking the lead, they applied gulal on the children's cheeks and said,

"This is a very special moment for us. We are happy to celebrate Holi with the children." A boy named Jaydev shared his thoughts,

"Earlier, I used to be afraid of the police, but now it feels like they are a part of our happiness and are here to protect us." This colorful festival became a bridge of friendship between the children and the police. On the occasion, Police Officer



Trilok ji also expressed his feelings:

"These children deserve to celebrate happiness,

and for us, being a part of that joy is a golden opportunity. When children celebrate festivals with us, it removes fear and hesitation, and builds a better relationship between the police and the children."

This initiative not only touched the hearts of the police officers but also changed how the children perceive the police. They no longer see them just as symbols of authority or protection, but as friends and companions. This proves that when every section of society is given love and equality, it strengthens the bond of trust and friendship in relationships.

On International Street Children's Day

CHILDREN CELEBRATED RIGHTS, PARTICIPATION, AND LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE 'STREET CHAMPS' TOURNAMENT

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marriage, child labour, and laws related to children in a fun and relatable way through cartoon characters.

Chhotu and Shera are characters who are closely connected to children's everyday lives. Through stories, they teach children how to identify and use their rights, and how to stand up when those rights are denied. The main goal of launching this book was to make information about rights accessible and entertaining for street-connected and working children. The comic was unveiled in front of hundreds of children participating in the sports festival, ensuring the message reaches far and wide, empowering more children to bring change in their lives.

Through this initiative, Chetna organization made a creative effort to ensure that education and awareness are not confined to textbooks and classrooms, but become tools of empowerment shaped by children's interests and understanding.

On this occasion, street-connected and working children actively participated in various games. During the event, Chetna organization also launched a new song titled "Bachchon Ke Hain Chaar Adhikaar" (Children Have Four Rights), focused on child rights. The primary

aim of this song is to raise awareness among children—especially those on the margins of society—about their four key rights in a simple, creative, and musical format.

This song was specifically developed for children living or working on the streets, or those involved in child labour, helping them understand their rights in a fun and engaging way. Instead of delivering preachy messages, the song uses an entertaining approach to inform children about their rights to protection, participation, development, and survival. It encourages them to recognize abuse, avoid physical punishment, and understand the importance of education. By doing so, it empowers children to raise their voices and recognize their value as equal members of society. The song will be shared widely in schools, community gatherings, education centers, and Bal Panchayats (children's councils), and will also be promoted through social media and digital platforms. Its goal is not just to educate, but also to instill a sense of belonging and confidence in every child. In addition, the event featured a unique platform called "Street Talk," where street-connected and working children freely and fearlessly shared their stories, thoughts, and dreams.

Eleven-year-old Aamir from West Delhi shared how he is now studying in Class 8 and how Chetna's support brought positive changes in his life. Thirteen-year-old Devi emotionally expressed, "Life has its struggles, but those who face them become stronger. I now go to school and also help my mother at her tea stall."

Through Street Talk, children shared how they are striving to become part of mainstream society. Their world is not just defined by streets or labour, but by dreams, hopes, and rights. They spoke about their ongoing efforts toward education, sports, and holistic growth. This platform gave them the power to speak up, recognize their rights, and feel heard.

One child said, "We have dreams, we just need a little support,"—a powerful reminder that behind every struggle lies a spark of hope and confidence. The platform was not just about sharing challenges, but also about celebrating resilience and the children's journey toward change and empowerment.

During the sports tournament organized on the occasion of International Children's Day, children from different regions who had come to participate spoke with Balaknama child reporters and shared their experiences.

Before the final matches, the young reporters engaged with both participants and spectators, capturing their thoughts and feelings.

Fifteen-year-old Aslam (name changed) from West Delhi shared his excitement:

"Today is International Children's Day, a day dedicated to children. Kids from different states have come to play on this field, and Chetna's team brought us here to participate. We've won two kabaddi matches and are now in the finals. We're playing with full dedication and team spirit, and we pray to win the final too."

Fourteen-year-old Shahid from Gurugram said that he was selected for the tournament by Chetna because he regularly plays kabaddi after school and tuition:

"When we heard about the tournament, we took the initiative ourselves. We weren't afraid because we've been practicing already and know how to play bravely."

Ten-year-old Saniya shared:

"Education is our identity, and sports are our nation's pride. When we reached the finals, our parents were so happy!"

Eleven-year-old Dilip from Noida shared that although he had prepared for kho-kho, he had to switch to

kabaddi due to changes in the team:

"We never imagined we'd win a trophy and medals. This is the first big joy of our lives, and when we shared the news at home, everyone was so happy!"

Twelve-year-old Ram from Noida Sector 115, the junior kho-kho team captain, said:

"In the beginning, our team was making fouls, but I explained things to them, and in the end, we won. A captain's job is to guide the team, and when they listened to me, we succeeded. This win means a lot to us."

The enthusiasm of the spectator children was no less. Kartik from West Delhi said:

"Even if we aren't on the field, our friends are. We're clapping and cheering them on. This event was organized by Chetna, and the best part is that there's no discrimination based on gender here."

This tournament not only gave children a chance to play but also encouraged leadership, friendship, and confidence. At the end of the program, children clicked joyful photos with their new friends and headed back to their communities with smiles on their faces.

In all, the event became a vibrant celebration of child participation, combining sports, self-esteem, and awareness of their rights.

CHILDHOOD IN THE SHADOW OF FEAR: ADDICTS TERRORIZE NEAR RAILWAY TRACKS

Bureau Report

Even today, in the heart of the national capital Delhi, some drug addicts and miscreants openly rob children and adults in broad daylight. This raises an important question: are there really no people or police around at such times?

To understand this issue, Balaknama reporters visited the location and spoke to children living in the area. The children shared their experiences—stories that are enough to shake anyone to the core. Sunaina (name changed),

a 15-year-old girl from the settlement, said that right next to their colony runs a railway track.

A train passes by every five minutes, but sometimes trains remain stationary for hours. No one knows when a train will start moving again.

Next to this track, there are several empty fields where addicts gather and consume various intoxicants. When children or adults pass by, they constantly live in fear. The most terrifying situations arise when someone—especially a child—is caught between the tracks while trains are moving



in both directions. Taking advantage of such moments, these addicts launch attacks. They snatch mobile phones,

money, and any other valuable possessions. If anyone resists, they are attacked with blades or other sharp objects. Often these looters manage to escape. Even when caught, their gang members help them get away. And if the police do arrest them, they often use their connections to get released.

The children shared that stationary trains on the tracks constantly create problems for them. Many times, when children try to cross the tracks, a train suddenly starts moving, leading to accidents. Some have lost their lives, while others have had close escapes.

HOMES TURNING INTO RUINS, DISHEARTENED CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Balaknama Reporter – Deepak Takkative Reporter – Ranveer

It is the government's responsibility to create and properly implement schemes for children, adults, the elderly, and all marginalized sections of society so that relief reaches those in need. However, it has often been observed that housing schemes, in the absence of monitoring, deteriorate into ruins.

From JDA Bapu Basti in Jaipur, nine Gujarati families were allotted houses in Kishanbagh. But they were given neither documentation nor any official instructions. With no other shelter available, they moved in out of compulsion. Unfortunately, essential provisions such as proper housing, safety, sanitation, and management were completely missing.

Currently, around 200 families

reside in these houses, including over 300 children, most of whom do not attend school. The conditions are dire—many houses have no doors, the surroundings are overgrown with wilderness, and there is no electricity or water supply. People survive their nights with the help of oil lamps and candles.

Children in this area collect scrap from nearby dump yards, gather metal, and many from the Gujarati community are forced to go on hawking rounds or occupy themselves with local street games. Though the government may have constructed these houses to provide shelter, poor management, neglect, and missteps have turned them into crumbling ruins. Doors have been stolen, tiles and iron fittings have vanished. Only the stone walls remain—simply because they couldn't be carried



away. Nearby, where there should have been a garden, playground, or school, there now stands a massive garbage dump. Instead of playing, children are found scavenging through waste. 13-year-old Kajal shared, “We used to pay

₹2,000 rent in JDA Basti. When we heard we were getting a home here, we were so happy thinking we wouldn't have to pay rent anymore. But when we arrived, we saw trash all around, broken homes, and no electricity or water. The previous settlement

was better—the only difference here is there's no rent.”

Despite these conditions, some parents are still trying to send their children to distant schools. 12-year-old Ranveer said, “We play here and collect useful things from the trash heaps to sell.”

More than 300 children are living in these deteriorated houses without access to school, clean water, electricity, safety, or hygiene. Looking at the condition of these homes, it seems the government merely provided a roof, and then abandoned them. Yet, you'll still see children playing outside these crumbling homes. For them, words like migration, rehabilitation, government, or schemes hold no meaning. What matters is food, some money, family, and friends. And somehow, they always manage to create a new home—wherever they go.

FATHER SETS HUT ON FIRE IN RAGE, COMMUNITY ACTS IN TIME TO PREVENT DISASTER

Balaknama Reporter: Damini Talkative Reporter: Riya

Balaknama reporter Damini visited several informal settlements in Jaipur and met 12-year-old Diya (name changed) in the Prem Nagar slum. Diya shared a frightening incident that recently occurred in her home.

In a soft, sad voice, she said, “Four nights ago, something terrifying happened. My father was very drunk. He and my mother got into an argument, and in a fit of rage, he set our hut on fire.”

As flames began to rise, neighbors quickly gathered and managed to put out the fire before it could spread. “If



they hadn't come in time, who knows how many huts would have burned down or how many

people would have been left homeless,” Diya said, her voice trembling.

Although the fire was extinguished, some of their belongings and bedding were reduced to ashes. Diya's eyes reflected the pain of her lived reality. She explained that her father drinks heavily every day and often fights with her mother. “The atmosphere at home is never peaceful. Sometimes we don't even get food to eat and

have to sleep hungry,” she said with a heavy heart.

For Diya, the worst part is the verbal abuse and violence that come with her father's addiction. Still, she ended her story with a hopeful wish:

“I wish my father would stop drinking. I wish he treated us with love and respect, so our home could be happy like others.”

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

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

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

DETERMINED TO LEARN DESPITE CHILD LABOUR, HARSHA IS SHAPING HER OWN FUTURE

Balaknama Reporter – Deepak
Talkative Reporter – Varsha

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited the Kali Ka Bhatta slum in Jaipur to speak with children about their families, education, and life challenges. There, he discovered an inspiring story—that of 13-year-old Harsha (name changed), a class 6 student, who is not only committed to her education but also works to support her family financially while nurturing her small personal dreams.

Harsha attends school regularly and performs well in her studies. Her dedication is evident in how attentively she listens to her teachers and



completes her homework on time, despite the hardships she faces. Her dream is to become a successful person and uplift her family's living conditions.

After school and during holidays, Harsha earns a small income by sticking decorative sequins on lehengas and clothes, making about ₹50 to ₹70 per day. This modest earning helps support her family. At a young age, she has realized the importance of being self-reliant, and she tries to manage her personal expenses—like buying clothes during festivals or essential school supplies—on her own. Balancing work and education is no easy task,

but Harsha manages her time wisely. She first attends school, then finishes her homework, and finally sits down to do her stitching work. She believes that with determination and hard work, any difficulty can be overcome.

Harsha's story is a source of inspiration for society. At a time when many children are dropping out of school, girls like Harsha are bravely pursuing their dreams despite all odds.

It is the responsibility of the government and society to support such children, so they can continue their education without interruption and build a better future for themselves.

CAN PLAYING WITH PUPPIES BE HARMFUL TO CHILDREN'S HEALTH?

Talkative report- Ranveer
Balaknama Reporter: Kishan

Children—whether human or animal—are always adorable, and people naturally feel the urge to care for them. In this piece, we're talking specifically about puppies. In many neighborhoods, small puppies wander the streets, capturing hearts with their innocence. Their cuteness makes children want to play with them. But have you ever wondered—could playing with puppies cause health problems?

In Noida, our reporters met a 14-year-old boy named Ahmed (name changed), whose face showed several

odd-looking rashes. When asked about them, he explained in detail. He lives with his parents in a rented home, surrounded by many dogs and their puppies. These dogs even guard the house and surrounding areas at night.

Children in the area often play with the puppies—running around with them, playing ball, picking them up, and hugging them. Some puppies are so clean and cute that kids allow them to lick their faces. It all seems fun at the time, but the aftereffects can be concerning.

Ahmed explained that due to frequent contact with the puppies, he began developing rashes on his face, constant



itching, and dizziness when closing his eyes. He struggles with these issues daily but has now started maintaining distance from the puppies.

Nearby, a 15-year-old boy named Chetan (name

changed) added that this isn't just Ahmed's issue. Many children in the settlement regularly play with the puppies. While the kids feel safe because the dogs never bite—since they've known

them for years—there's another issue. Most of the adult dogs roam through garbage and dirty drains. Yet, children still play with them.

The biggest concern is hygiene:

after playing, most children do not wash their hands with soap before eating. They only rinse their hands with plain water. This seemingly minor habit has a major impact, leading to recurring illnesses and health concerns among many children.

Loving dogs and playing with them isn't wrong. But maintaining cleanliness and prioritizing health is just as important.

CHILDREN ADOPTING NEW WAYS TO GET HIGH

Bureau Report

Everyone enjoys pursuing their hobbies—but is it right to harm others in the process? Around us, many young children are falling into the trap of substance abuse. But to what extent are they addicted, and what substances are they using?

This is something society must urgently understand. In a park in Noida, reporters spoke to a group of children to hear their stories firsthand. Many children visit this park daily, and among them, a significant number have become dependent on various addictive substances.

These include solution sniffing (whitener), marijuana, alcohol, bidi (local cigarettes), gutkha (chewing tobacco), and regular tobacco.

You might already know about whitener—the white fluid used to correct written mistakes. Children buy it from bookstores and sniff it using pieces of cloth to get high. In addition, there's another kind of solution used at bicycle repair shops—the yellow adhesive used to fix punctures. Children have now started using this tube solution as a drug too.

When journalists asked how children get access to alcohol—given that selling alcohol to minors is illegal—a child explained that in the evenings, when adults come to the park to drink, children hover nearby and ask for leftover liquor. While many adults refuse, some hand over their unfinished drinks, thinking it's better than wasting



it.

Even when parents find out and scold or beat their children, most kids are unable to stop. To prove their addiction, some children even took the reporters to the exact spots where they sniff solutions. There, children ranging from 8 to 17 years old were seen engaged in the habit.

The children revealed that many of their friends in the slums were already addicted. Spending time with them pulled others into the habit too. Now, even those who wish to quit find it extremely difficult to break free.

This growing trend paints a concerning picture of the increasing availability and use of intoxicants among children—and the societal failure to shield them from it.

SUDDEN EVICTION CREATES CHAOS, DISRUPTS DAILY LIVES OF WORKING CHILDREN

Talkative Reporter: Aashiq | Balaknama Reporter: Saberul

A sudden wave of panic swept through the Dhani area of Wazirabad, Sector 52, when a landowner arrived to reclaim possession of his property, demanding the evacuation of unauthorized constructions. Some individuals had reportedly built structures on the land without the owner's knowledge. Upon discovering this, the rightful owner appeared on-site and ordered immediate evacuation.

This unanticipated action triggered unrest throughout the neighborhood. The incident had a particularly disruptive effect on local residents, especially children and working individuals who were caught off guard as they stepped out for their daily



routines. Heavy crowding and confusion brought traffic to a standstill. Many commuters were delayed, some missed work entirely, and others were forced to take leave.

Residents noted that the eviction took place during the holy month of Ramadan—a time when many are fasting and already coping with intense summer

heat. The unexpected disruption proved mentally and physically exhausting, particularly for those observing the fast.

Children were among the

most affected. Several had to skip school as their families were forced to relocate abruptly. Many children were tasked with packing and helping move household belongings—physically demanding responsibilities that also took an emotional toll. They were separated from their friends and neighbors, which added to their distress.

The tension lingered in the area throughout the day, with people continuously discussing the incident. While some justified the action as necessary, others labeled it unfair. Regardless of perspective, one fact stood clear: the sudden eviction caused significant hardship for ordinary citizens—especially children and fasting residents—upending their daily lives in the process.

WISE ACTION BY BADHTE KADAM LEADERS SAVES A CHILD'S LIFE

Talkative Reporters: Suman & Vicky Baalaknama Reporter: Ritika

About a week ago, a distressing report emerged from the Chakkarpur area of Gurugram—a five-year-old girl had gone missing. The news reached two children associated with the Chetna organization and leaders of the Badhte Kadam federation Suman and Vicky. That evening, while returning home from the park, they saw a little girl standing alone and crying on the roadside.

Without hesitation, they approached her and tried to communicate. The girl was too frightened to speak at first. Gradually, she managed to say that she was five years old, but she was clearly confused and scared, unsure of what to do or where to go.

Suman and Vicky quickly decided to take her to the nearest police station so she could get proper help. Just then, they noticed a woman nearby, also in tears, seemingly searching for someone. The moment she saw the little girl, she rushed



to her and embraced her with overwhelming relief.

She was the child's mother. To confirm her identity,

Suman and Vicky asked the woman for proof. She showed them photos of the child on her phone. When the girl saw the pictures, she nodded in recognition. The woman then thanked the two young leaders profusely and took her daughter home safely.

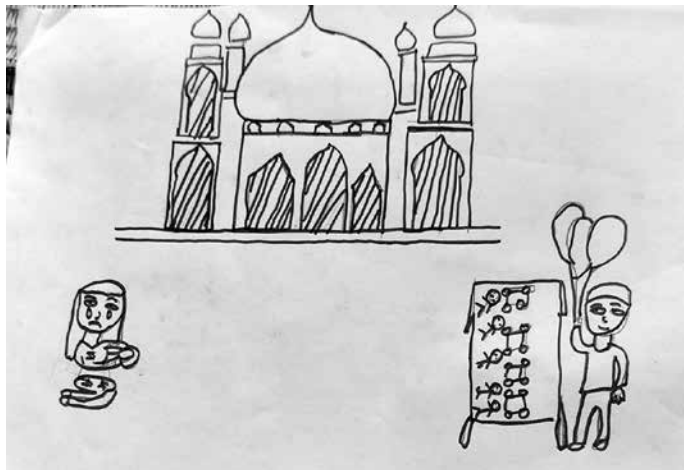
This incident proved that even children living or working on the streets can be wise and responsible. Suman and Vicky's timely and thoughtful actions are truly commendable and serve as an inspiring example of leadership and humanity.

THE BITTER REALITY OF CHILD LABOR BEHIND THE GLIMMERING FESTIVALS

Balaknama Reporter: Damini Talkative Reporter: Kamal

Jaipur is famous for its rich cultural heritage and grand festivals. However, behind the glitter of these colorful celebrations lies a bitter truth in the form of child labor. During festivals like Diwali, Teej, Gangaur, Eid, and other major celebrations, the number of children working on the streets of the city increases. These innocent children, who should be in school at this age, are seen selling toys, flowers, balloons, and decorative items on the footpaths.

Recently, Balaknama



reporter Damini visited various settlements in Jaipur. She observed children selling toys and other items on

the streets, especially near the Amanisha Dargah and during the Gangaur festival. Damini spoke to some of the

children to understand their experiences.

An 11-year-old boy, Vimal (name changed), shared his story, saying, "During Eid, we sell toys outside mosques and sometimes beg as well. We don't like it, but our family forces us. Sometimes we get money in return, sometimes just food." Vimal further explained, "There is a huge crowd outside the mosques during Eid. We sell toys and beg in the crowd, and sometimes we don't even go home. We sleep by the roadside hoping to get some money the next day."

Similarly, a 12-year-old girl, Sahar (name changed),

shared her story and said, "I don't like begging at all. It's embarrassing. People often say bad things about us, look at us with disgust, and treat us badly. We have to sit by the roadside in the hot sun. But this is our reality. For us, festivals just mean having enough food to fill our stomachs and collecting a little money."

Amid the glimmer and grandeur of the festivals, this image of child labor is a serious concern. Society and families need to come together and take concrete steps so that every child can go to school and have a secure and bright childhood.

THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF DIAPER WASTE ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Talkative Reporter: Veera
Reporter: Kishan

In areas like Noida, Delhi, Gurgaon, and Haryana, many people migrate from their villages in search of work. They settle wherever they find a hut or a small room, and begin their lives in these conditions. Most people live in slums or rented small houses. Recently, when some Balaknama reporters visited several buildings in Noida, they found a situation that required them to talk to the children living there.

A 12-year-old girl, Ruby (name changed), shared her experience with the reporters: "The building we live in has

over 40 rooms, spread across four floors. At the corners of each floor, there are small, deep trash bins. In the entire building, there are only six trash bins." She continued, "The residents throw their household garbage, like milk pouches, plastic, cardboard, etc., into these trash bins. The biggest problem arises when people throw used, dirty diapers of small children directly into these bins without covering them."

The building also has another problem – it doesn't have any gates. It is open on all sides, allowing anyone to come and go at any time of the day or night. Often, stray dogs enter the building at night and scatter the dirty diapers from the bins throughout the complex and the surrounding



streets. In the morning, when children and people leave their homes, they find the place covered in filth. The foul smell from the dirty diapers, which contain children's feces, fills the air. As people climb or descend the stairs, the filth sticks to their feet.

When someone asks for cleaning, everyone avoids responsibility, saying, "We didn't throw it, why should we clean it?" The children explained that this filth has led to several children falling ill. Living in such an unhygienic and stinky environment has made life difficult for them, and sometimes even eating becomes a challenge.

SEVERE WATER CRISIS GRIPS SLUMS OF GURUGRAM

Balaknama Reported
Raj Kishore and
talkative reporter: Ashraf

A worsening water crisis is making daily life increasingly difficult for residents of Gurugram's urban slums, particularly for children and their families. A recent ground report by Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore has revealed the extent of the problem across several slum settlements in the city. Almost every slum is facing acute water shortages, with residents forced to spend hours each day just to access a basic necessity. The scarcity of drinking water and the lack of water for sanitation and hygiene have emerged as major concerns, particularly during the scorching summer months. In Nirvana Country, Balaknama's "talkative reporter" Ashraf shared a firsthand account of the daily struggle: "When there's a power cut, we don't get any water," he said. "In this heat, we need water the most, but without electricity, the motor doesn't run, and the taps go dry. We then have to walk long

distances to fetch water, which takes up a lot of our time."

Ashraf described how the crisis affects not just health and hygiene, but also education and daily routines.

"When the power is out from early morning, we get up very early to stand in line for water. There are crowds at the source, and we often wait for hours. This means we miss out on schoolwork and other responsibilities. Bathing, using the toilet – everything becomes a problem because all of it needs water," he explained.

While municipal water tankers occasionally arrive, they are insufficient to meet the needs of the entire community.

"Sometimes a tanker comes, but it runs out very quickly. Not everyone gets the amount of water they need," Ashraf added. "It's the same in the nearby slums too." Ashraf, who lives in a household of seven, highlighted the strain the crisis places on larger families. "We need more water, but how much can we carry at once? What can we do? What's the solution to our problem?" he asked.



SKILL AND SPIRIT CARVE A NEW PATH TO SUCCESS

Talkative Reporter: Jeet
Balaknama Reporter: Ritika

Jeet, a 13-year-old associated with the Chetna organization, is a boy whose story can touch anyone's heart. His family migrated from West Bengal to Gurugram in search of a livelihood. Everything in the new city was unfamiliar, and Jeet used to wander around all day with no connection to studies—he didn't even know how to read Hindi. One day, he met a social worker from Chetna who not only listened to him but encouraged him to start coming to the center. That meeting changed the course of his life.

Jeet's uncle runs a scrap shop, and from there, Jeet began collecting broken or discarded items to create new

things. Fans, speakers, toys—he started building all sorts of models from scrap, and all this without any formal training.

"I learned just by watching and trying over and over again," he says. His curiosity and talent with his hands have earned him admiration from everyone around him. Whenever Jeet brings his handmade models to class, all the children get excited and

inspired.

Not only is he a gifted creator, but he's also now doing well in his studies. "Earlier, I couldn't read Hindi at all, but now I can read and write," he says proudly.

His younger sister is also slowly starting to learn new things, inspired by him. Jeet strongly believes that education is important and is determined to continue learning and moving forward.



CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS

CONTACT THESE TOLL FREE
NUMBERS IF YOU FACE ANY
PROBLEM.

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

CHILDREN MOVING FORWARD ON THEIR OWN TOWARDS THEIR DREAMS

Talkative Reporter: Rakhi and Reporter: Kishan

So far, you must have heard and seen tickets for buses, trains, parks, and fairs. And whenever you visit such places, you have to use these tickets. But have you ever heard about the Badhte Kadam federation membership?

Today, we will tell you about the Badhte Kadam ticket — how it works and what its benefits are. There is a ₹5 for membership in the Badhte Kadam organization, which the children of Badhte Kadam lovingly call the Badhte Kadam slip. This slip is purchased once every month by the members of Badhte Kadam, and upon purchasing it, a person becomes a member of the organization. The money collected from these slips is saved under the Badhte Kadam fund and is used when Balaknama highlights children's problems. If no other organization steps forward to help, Balaknama reporters use these funds to support the children.



Additionally, in times of natural disasters, conflicts, or incidents like fires, the workers from Balaknama and Chetna organization use this fund to reach out and assist the affected children.

Every month, when children get their slip, they feel very happy. A 15-year-old girl, Roma (name changed), expressed her happiness after getting her Badhte Kadam slip, saying,

"I come from a poor family. When people around us help us by giving clothes or other things, it makes us very happy, and we accept it gladly. But deep inside, I have always wished

that I, too, could help children who are struggling and in need. I used to wonder how I could help when we don't even have enough money ourselves. But now, every month when I buy a ₹5 slip from Badhte Kadam, it makes me feel proud that even my small contribution is making a difference." Now you might be wondering: "Can we also buy a slip and help the children?"

Currently, only child members connected to Badhte Kadam can buy the slip, but you can still support street and working children by sending a message to us through the email published in Balaknama.

A STEP TOWARD EDUCATION AND SELF-RELIANCE WITH A BICYCLE RECEIVED THROUGH A GOVERNMENT SCHEME

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak Talkative Reporter: Neha

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited the Mangyawas settlement in Jaipur to learn about the problems, achievements, and family and educational experiences of street and working children. During this visit, 15-year-old Neha shared her story. She is currently studying in Class 9 at the Government Senior Secondary School, Mangyawas.

Neha shared that last month, under a government scheme, bicycles were distributed to girls studying in Class 9, and she received a bicycle as a gift from the school principal. After receiving the bicycle, Neha realized that her personal tasks were getting completed more quickly, saving her valuable time.

She explained that her father runs a small ironing shop, and her responsibility



is to collect clothes from customers and return them after ironing. Earlier, she used to do this work on foot, often walking long distances. Now, with the bicycle, the work has become much easier. She can carry a larger number of clothes at once on the bicycle, allowing her to finish the work more quickly and have more time to study.

Additionally, since the distance between their home and the shop is quite significant, whenever the family needs something urgently, she can immediately fetch it using the bicycle. Neha said, "Getting this bicycle has been very useful for me. It is a wonderful gift from the government scheme." Neha further shared that she aims to score good marks in Class 12 so that she can qualify to receive a scooter under another government scheme. She dreams of carving out her own place in this competitive world. Speaking about her family, she mentioned that her parents are very poor and she has three younger siblings. Being the eldest daughter, her dream is to provide financial support to her family.

Indeed, the positive impact of such government schemes is encouraging girls towards education and giving them a chance to realize their dreams.

CHILD FORCED TO SELL FLOWERS LATE INTO THE NIGHT DUE TO FINANCIAL STRUGGLES

Reporter: Kishan

In the battle to fill their stomachs, street and working children toil day and night for just a few pieces of bread. When Balaknama reporters spoke with a 17-year-old girl selling flowers in Noida Sector 18 market, she shared the circumstances of her life.

The girl, Suman (name changed), explained that her family consists of eight members — four sisters, two brothers, and her parents. She is the third in line among her siblings. Her entire family lives in a small rented house in Sector 18's settlement, and all of them are involved in selling flowers. She mentioned that they arrive at the market at 11 AM and continue selling flowers until 2 AM. When the reporters learned that she worked until such late hours,

they were deeply concerned and asked her why they had to stay so late.

She explained, "There are many large malls around here where the crowd is bigger at night. Compared to the daytime, the chances of selling flowers are much higher at night." She also shared the financial difficulties her family faces. "Whatever we earn goes towards the household expenses. My father has the responsibility of four daughters. We need money for their marriages as well, but his earnings are not enough to manage everything alone, so we all have to work."

She continued, "Sometimes, when people see us working so hard late at night, even if they don't buy flowers, they still give us some money. This money becomes the support for our household."

A TINY SHOULDER BEARING THE BURDEN OF FAMILY TROUBLES

Talkative Reporter: Ramesh and Reporter: Kishan

Street and working children often join their parents in various tasks to help fulfill their small dreams. Recently, while 'Balaknama' reporters were visiting the streets of Noida, they met a 14-year-old boy named Shahid (name changed), who was busy collecting scrap with his small cart. The reporters spoke with him and tried to understand his life story.

The boy shared that he has been living with his parents and two brothers in a rented settlement in Noida for the past six years. His elder brother has fallen into drug addiction, and despite several efforts by his parents to get him treated, they were unsuccessful. A lot of money was spent on the treatment, which worsened the family's financial situation to the point where they could no longer afford Shahid's school fees.

Earlier, he used to attend school, but due to the deteriorating circumstances, he had to drop out. Now, every morning, he goes out to collect



scrap, and whatever little he earns, he hands over to his parents to help manage the household expenses. His father then sells the scrap to meet the family's needs.

Despite everything, there was still a sparkle of hope in the boy's eyes. He shared that his father has promised to admit him into a hostel in a few years, so he can resume his studies and work towards his dreams.

This story truly highlights the reality of countless children who, despite facing adverse conditions, continue to hold on to hope and struggle toward a better future.

CHILDREN'S TROUBLED DUE TO WATER SHORTAGE

Balaknama Reporter: Damini Talking Reporter: Neha

In this scorching summer, the children of Jaysinghpura Khor are being deprived of a basic necessity like water. Some time ago, pipelines for clean drinking water were laid, bringing a wave of happiness across the children's faces — they believed their struggle for water was over. However, this relief lasted only two months. Once again, the

problem of water scarcity has resurfaced. Every day, under the harsh sun, young children go to fetch water from a boring (hand-pump) located outside the settlement. When a Balaknama reporter asked them why they didn't fetch water in the evening instead of suffering under the blazing sun, 14-year-old Neha replied,

"There are fewer people during the daytime. If we go to fetch water in the morning or evening, we have to stand



in long queues. Sometimes we don't even get a chance, or fights break out over getting water first. That's why we fetch water during the afternoon heat — it's easier to get our turn." Another girl, Karishma, said, "Carrying heavy loads and walking barefoot under the sun has become a habit for us. If we don't fetch water, how will we survive the summer?" Rahul shared that a water tanker sometimes comes to their settlement, charging 20

rupees for a single container, but it too has become irregular.

The residents of the settlement have made multiple appeals to the administration for regular water supply, but no permanent solution has been provided yet.

During this intense summer, when the risks of dehydration, heatstroke, and skin burns increase significantly, the children's struggle for water becomes even more alarming.

THE AWARENESS OF HOPE AMIDST POVERTY AND CHALLENGES

Talkative Reporter: Pari and Reporter: Kishan

Poverty is a major reason that prevents people from moving forward in life and fulfilling their dreams. It traps a person in constant struggles, and the poor often face challenges that the wealthy do not. Due to poverty, the poor experience more mental and physical hardships.

Recently, there was an opportunity to learn the story

of a 10-year-old girl, Madhu (name changed), who lives in Delhi, and it made the impact of poverty even more evident.

Madhu shared, "I am now 10 years old, and our family has been living in Delhi for the past 11-12 years. There are three members in our family - my two sisters and my mother. You might be wondering where my father is? My father is still alive, but his thinking has changed. When he lived with us, we



were very happy. Even small things brought us joy. But after he left, our life became very difficult. Now my mother works in houses as a domestic helper, and we live with our grandmother. She takes care of us all day."

She further said, "Since my father left, my mother, who used to work from home, now has to work outside. The money she earns is used to run the household. But whenever we need clothes,

toys, or books, we have to think a hundred times before buying anything. Sometimes, we don't even have enough money to buy a pencil or a book. But now, we are happy because we go to Chetna organization's Education Club, where all our small needs are taken care of. When I am there, I don't feel the absence of my father. I feel very happy, because there, I get love, care, and education all at once."

KABADDI TOURNAMENT ORGANIZED ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN'S DAY

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak Talkative Reporter: Rohit

On the occasion of International Street and Working Children's Day, a Kabaddi tournament was organized under the "Street Champs Sports Tournament" in the Jamdoli settlement of Jaipur. Children associated with various alternative education centers operating in Jaipur's settlements participated according to their age groups. A total of four teams competed in the tournament, named: Kabaddi Kesari, Damdar Dhurandhar, Sadak ke Soorma, and Dungal ke Veer.

This event was organized not only to entertain the children and promote their physical development but also

to instill important life values such as teamwork, discipline, and confidence through sports.

It was the first opportunity for street and working children to participate in a sports competition, and the excitement among the children during the tournament was truly remarkable.

On the Kabaddi field, the children played with full energy and enthusiasm, and the sparkle on their faces told the story of their new experiences and happiness.

Thirteen-year-old Anisha shared, "Playing Kabaddi with boys for the first time was a new experience, but once the game started, we gave it our all."

Meanwhile, ten-year-old Rohit, who was participating in a competition for the first time, said, "I felt very good. At first, I

was scared, but after practicing Kabaddi for a few days and getting encouragement from friends on the field, I played too. Now, I want to play Kabaddi every day." Twelve-year-old Rekha also expressed her happiness, saying, "We rarely get a chance to play. When the Chetna organization staff taught us how to play, it was a lot of fun. I want to continue playing in the future."

It is extremely important to connect street and working children with sports activities along with education so that their confidence can grow, and they too can experience all that every child deserves.

This sports tournament not only gave the children a new experience but also showcased the hidden potential within them.

MISLEADING RUMORS IN THE SETTLEMENT ARE HARMING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION



Balaknama Reporter: Deepak Talking Reporter: Ajay

The Lakhesra slum of Jaipur is currently engulfed in deep anxiety and fear. Over the past few weeks, a wave of fear and rumors has been spreading throughout the community, creating an atmosphere of panic.

According to the rumors, a gang of seven people comes into the settlement at night, targeting women, adolescent girls, and young children. It is said that this gang hides within the settlement and specifically tries to prey on girls.

These misleading rumors have spread so rapidly that people have become extremely concerned about the security of their homes. Almost every family now has one member staying awake through the night to keep watch, and young children are too scared to step out of their homes alone. Many adolescent girls and women also avoid going outside because of this fear. The biggest impact of this fear and

stress is being felt on children's education. At present, exam season is underway, but due to the rumors, many children are unable to attend school. Parents feel anxious about sending their children outside, which is not only affecting their education but is also seriously harming their mental health.

Ajay, who has been living in the settlement with his family for the past 15-16 years, shared that he has never witnessed a situation like this before. He believes it is purely a rumor, but the fear has spread so deeply that people can no longer distinguish between truth and lies.

The rumors spreading in Lakhesra are not only creating tension in society but are also negatively impacting the education and development of the next generation. Only accurate information and active intervention by the administration can end this atmosphere of fear, helping people move past rumors and return to normal life.

STREET CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN BOARD EXAMS WITH BIG DREAMS

Balaknama Reporter: Damini Talkative Reporter: Priyanka

Balaknama reporter Damini recently visited various settlements in Jaipur and tried to understand the experiences of street and working children regarding the board exams. During this visit, it came to light that "setting an example of determination and hard work to fulfill their dreams, many street and working children appeared for the 5th-grade board exams for the first time this year."

Despite the ongoing struggles for survival and constant challenges in pursuing education, these children did not give up. After enrolling in school, their daily routine of balancing studies with work was extremely tough, yet these tiny steps approached the exams with great hope.

Eleven-year-old Shakir (name changed), who used to



work at a tea shop to support his family financially, now prioritizes his education and says, "I feel very happy going to school. Earlier, it felt like studying was not meant for us, but now I dream of becoming a teacher."

Priya (name changed), who helps her mother in setting stones in lacquer bangles,

says, "I get tired at night, but I love going to school in the morning. Now, I want to study and become a doctor."

The smiles on their faces and the hope in their eyes are clearly visible. This exam is not just an academic evaluation but a significant symbol of their growing confidence and their step towards a better 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.

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