

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 BRAVE THE SCORCHING HEAT IN SEARCH OF SHELTER AND RELIEF

Balaknama reporters – Ritika, Kishan, Rajkishore, and Deepak

The severe heatwave across the country has made life extremely difficult. In India's northern states, temperatures are consistently recorded above 42°C daily. While everyone is struggling to cope with this scorching heat, the real question is: how are street-living and working children managing to survive in such extreme weather conditions?

Balaknama reporters spoke with street-living and working children in various states to understand how they are coping with this harsh summer. Rehmaan (name changed), a 13-year-old boy who lives in a rented room in Noida Sector 115, shared his experience:

"We have a small street cart where we sell fruits and roasted corn. We use a coal-based machine to roast the corn. But right now, it's so hot that we don't even feel like setting up the stall. Many times, we wonder whether we should even go out or not—it feels so exhausting. We keep hoping the heat will reduce slowly, but it just keeps increasing every day, causing so many problems."

He adds, "We set up our cart near a traffic signal. There's a large park nearby

with a water tank that has clean water. When the heat becomes unbearable, we bathe in that water to get some relief. We sweat so much that it doesn't even dry. When we're standing out on the street, the sun is blazing. We try drinking cold water, but it gets warm quickly due to the heat."

When Balaknama reporters visited children living in the slums of Noida, they met 15-year-old Ruhani (name changed), who said: "Most of the houses in our settlement have tin roofs. As soon as summer begins, all the children here start suffering. The intense heat and humidity make it extremely difficult to stay inside. The tin roofs get so hot that we have to finish all household work before the sun fully rises. If not done in time, cooking, cleaning, or even resting becomes nearly impossible due to the heat."

She continues, "After 10 AM, the heat increases drastically. So we children and adults go and sit under the shade of big trees nearby for some relief. Most houses have fans, but when the roof itself is burning, even the fans blow hot air. It becomes impossible to stay indoors."

She adds, "While sitting under trees, we feel some breeze, but when that stops too, sweat starts pouring from



our bodies, causing itching and irritation. Many children have developed boils and rashes due to the heat. At night, there's often no electricity, so we're forced to sleep outside. The mornings are slightly cooler, and that's when many children catch colds and coughs."

Rakesh (name changed), a 16-year-old from Sector 126, says, "If we had uninterrupted electricity during the summer, especially at night, it would bring us a lot of relief. But here, there's no fixed schedule for power supply at night, which disturbs our sleep and makes our bodies feel tired."

Rakesh's family sells fruits on a cart. They leave home around 4 PM every day with their cart, even though it's the hottest time of the day. The location where they set up the cart is about a kilometer away

from their home. "Walking in such strong sunlight while pushing the cart is very difficult. We often have to stop every five minutes. Wherever we find a bit of shade, we stand there for a while and move forward slowly," he says.

To avoid the heat, Rakesh carries a water bottle and covers his head with a cloth or cap.

"Still, the sun hits not just the head but the whole body. Our clothes get soaked with sweat. Every year in June and July, my family and I suffer from coughs, fevers, boils, dehydration, dizziness, and headaches," he shares.

To prevent these health issues, Rakesh says they take medicines from a nearby hospital and use home remedies. "At home, we drink turmeric milk to reduce fever.

We chew neem leaves in the morning, which helps prevent boils and keeps our body healthy."

Near their cart spot, there's a cycle repair shop. The shop owner has put up a large plastic sheet outside for shade. Rakesh and others like him sit under this sheet to escape the direct sun.

"When we get thirsty, we get water from the nearby food stalls," he adds. As temperatures continue to rise, the condition of children living in Delhi is becoming more and more difficult. Child reporters spoke with several children living in Shakur Basti, who openly shared how the heat is affecting them and the challenges they face.

Ruby says, "A normal summer day is very tough for us. Just hearing the word 'heat' makes our faces drop. The extreme heat brings irritability, and we don't feel like doing anything. Fatigue and laziness take over our bodies. When the temperature gets very high, it becomes difficult to stay indoors even after 10 AM. Water stored in gallons gets so hot that we can't even drink it. So even an ordinary day becomes extremely challenging for us."

To stay cool and hydrated, children are trying different

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CHILDREN TAKING STEPS TOWARD SUCCESS THROUGH SPORTSMANSHIP

Balaknama Reporter – Ritika

On April 12, children associated with the social organization Chetna got a golden opportunity to participate in Kho-Kho and Kabaddi competitions. This event filled the children with new energy and enthusiasm. Chetna formed a total of four teams for the competition—two each for Kho-Kho and Kabaddi—divided into junior and senior categories.

Initially, the children were not very familiar with the rules and techniques

of these traditional games. Keeping this in mind, Chetna invited a special coach who provided regular training sessions. Through consistent practice and a strong desire to learn, the children not only understood the rules but also mastered the art of playing the games. They were also educated about the history of Kho-Kho and Kabaddi, their rules, and effective ways to play them.

Ultimately, their hard work paid off when Chetna's team performed excellently and secured second place in

the competition. After the event, all the players were honored and awarded prizes, lighting up their faces with joy.

The children described the experience as very special and enjoyable. They shared that participating in this competition taught them many new things and that this moment would always be memorable for them.

Other children at the center also enjoyed the games thoroughly and were inspired by their peers' energy and dedication. A social worker from Chetna encouraged



the children by saying, "Next time, we'll bring you again, but this time your goal should be the first position." The children enthusiastically replied, "Okay! Next time we will definitely come first!"

Truly, this initiative by

Chetna has sparked interest in sports among the children. They also learned the true meanings of teamwork, discipline, and hard work—values that will help them not just on the field but in all aspects of life.

CHILDREN'S LIVES DISRUPTED BY WORSENING WATER CRISIS

Balaknama Reporter – Raj Kishor, Talkative Reporter – Ashraf

During a visit to various slum communities in Gurugram, Balaknama reporter Raj Kishor witnessed a deeply troubling water crisis. Almost every settlement was facing severe water shortages. Children and their families were struggling to meet even their most basic daily needs. Forget clean drinking water—getting enough water for bathing and using the toilet had also become a major challenge.

Ashraf, a child reporter from the Nirvana Country area,

shared his experience:

“When the electricity goes out, the water motor stops working, and the water supply is cut off. In this extreme heat, when we need water the most, we suffer the most. We then have to travel long distances to fetch water, and a lot of our time is spent doing just that.”

Ashraf further explained that if there's no electricity from early morning, they have to start arranging water right from the break of dawn. The places they fetch water from are already crowded, and they have to wait in line for hours. “Because of this,” he said, “all other activities, including our



studies, get affected. It's difficult to bathe, use the toilet—everything becomes a problem, because we need water for everything.”

Sometimes a government

water tanker arrives, but even that gets emptied quickly. It never supplies enough water to meet the needs of all families in the area. And this isn't just a problem in Nirvana Country—

many nearby slum areas are facing the same crisis.

Ashraf ended by saying, “There are seven members in our family, so we need more water. But how much can we carry at once? What can we do now? What is the solution to our problem?”

This isn't just Ashraf's question—it reflects the struggles of thousands of families living in slums, who fight every day for access to water. This is not merely about a lack of basic services—it's a crisis that directly affects children's education, health, and dignity, and it can no longer be ignored.

ON INTERNATIONAL STREET CHILDREN'S DAY, CHILDREN SHARED THEIR LIFE STORIES IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Balaknama Reporter – Saberul Talkative Reporter – Azharul

On the occasion of International Street Children's Day, the social organization Chetna organized a deeply moving and empowering event titled “Apni Kahani Apni Zubaani” (Our Story in Our Words). The purpose of this program was to provide a platform for children who live on the streets—children whose voices are often drowned out by the noise of society.

On this special day, as the children shared the true stories of their lives, there was hardly

a dry eye in the room. The event began with an inspiring opening speech, where the organizers highlighted the significance of International Street Children's Day.

Soon after, the stage came alive with the children's raw, heartfelt, and honest narratives. One by one, children stepped forward and shared their struggles, dreams, and lived experiences in simple yet powerful words.

When 12-year-old Azharul took the stage and shared how he became connected with Chetna and how it changed his life, an emotional wave swept



across the auditorium.

This event was more than just storytelling—it carried a powerful message:

These children don't just

need sympathy—they need opportunities.

In his address, Chetna's founder said, “Our aim is not just to listen to these children,

but to give them a platform to speak. This event is an attempt to show society that true change is not possible unless we listen to these innocent voices.”

“Apni Kahani Apni Zubaani” was not just a program—it was a mirror, reminding society of its responsibility. It emerged as a ray of hope for the thousands of children who are still forced to live on the streets.

At the end of the event, each child was gifted a book titled “Chhotu Aur Shera”, based on child rights, so they could learn about their rights and move forward with confidence.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN BRAVE THE SCORCHING HEAT IN SEARCH OF SHELTER AND RELIEF

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“There are many trees around us, and sitting under them gives us some relief. But since boys usually gather there, it becomes difficult for girls to go and sit. That's why girls often sit under the fan inside their homes, drape wet clothes or scarves over themselves to feel some coolness,” she explains.

Even the water stored in matka or jugs becomes too hot to drink. So some children buy ice for ₹50–70 from the nearby market and put it in the jug to cool the water and get some relief.

Due to the hot winds (loo), children are falling sick with fever, weakness, and dizziness. Some are experiencing blurred vision, which they try to treat using eye drops. Skin rashes and heat boils (ghamoriya) are also common, so they buy powder from nearby medical stores to deal with it.

Near the basti, there's a railway track where trains are repaired. When trains are stationary, many children and adults sit underneath them to cool off. Before the trains move, railway staff notify everyone to clear the area for safety.

About 500–600 meters away from the basti, there's a

platform with large tin roofs that allow cool air to pass through. Children and adults go there to sit for long hours—sometimes four to five hours—to escape the heat.

The children also shared that in this heat, finding a cool place isn't enough—water has become a major concern. “There is a severe shortage of water in the basti, and everyone needs to use it wisely. Some families have private taps or motors, but they don't share water with others, which makes the situation worse,” they said.

They believe if everyone conserves water together, life would be a bit easier.

Raja shared that it gets extremely hot where he works. While there's an option to install a fan, there's fear that the air from the fan might ignite something flammable and start a fire in the factory. That's why they can't even use a fan and have to work in extreme heat.

Children have developed their own ways to deal with the heat through awareness and experience.

Kiran says, “I work in a nearby bungalow where I live 24/7 to take care of the children. I return home once a week to meet my parents.”

She adds, “Summer days

aren't too difficult because I mostly stay inside the house. But when I have to step out to buy something from the market or mall, the sun feels unbearable. Sometimes I feel like telling my employer that I don't want to go out in this heat, but saying so doesn't help. She says, ‘Everyone is dealing with the heat—you still have to work.’ So I'm forced to go out in the sun.”

When Balaknama reporters visited children in Jaipur and spoke to them about how they're managing in the heat, many important insights came forward.

Aftab, a 12-year-old boy living in a Jaipur basti, explained in detail how he and his friends are dealing with the extreme heat. He said, “The intense heat makes us sweat excessively, we feel exhausted, and sometimes even dizzy. Some children like to sit under trees, where they get a bit of relief.”

One child mentioned that frequent coughing and sneezing sometimes leads to stomach pain, which then requires a visit to the doctor. However, most children consider these issues common and temporary, so they usually avoid spending money on medicines and prefer home remedies instead.

They shared that when going outside, they cover their heads with a cloth or carry an umbrella to protect themselves from the sun. Many children, especially when just going to nearby shops, step out barefoot, which causes burning sensations and discomfort in their feet. They acknowledged the importance of wearing slippers to stay healthy.

The increasing heat is affecting everyone's lives, but children are trying to protect themselves with awareness and small practical solutions.

After exploring the experiences of children in a few states, let's look at the situation of children living in Gurgaon. In the JMD area of Gurgaon, a 13-year-old girl shared that when the weather is moderately hot, it feels manageable because the sun isn't too harsh, and it's easier to move around. During such times, children even step outside to play. But when the heat intensifies, no one feels like going out, and staying indoors becomes difficult as well, especially because their house is made of tin, which turns extremely hot.

To beat the heat and stay hydrated, children try to drink as much water as possible and also use glucose. They try to

eat fruits and cold items to keep their bodies cool. They believe drinking at least 2–3 liters of water a day is essential. Some children also try to cool themselves down by bathing two to three times a day.

A 14-year-old girl shared that during summer, one should avoid going out unless absolutely necessary. If stepping out is essential, it's important to carry an umbrella or cover the head with a cloth. Carrying one or two bottles of water is also advised to prevent dehydration. She also emphasized the need to consume more fruits and drink ORS solutions to keep the body energized and hydrated.

She concluded by suggesting that one should wear cotton clothes in the summer and consume cooling items like sherbet, water, and juice. If travel is needed, using public transport or buses is better to avoid walking long distances in the sun.

These accounts highlight how the summer season becomes a major challenge for street and working children and their families. Regular electricity supply, access to clean drinking water, and proper shaded spaces could provide significant relief to such children.

A GLIMPSE OF JOY ON CHILDREN'S FACES AFTER SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Talkative Reporter – Priya

In a small settlement in Badshahpur, Sector 66, Gurugram, lives a community of children who once survived on the streets, working to support their families. These are the children who used to beg, collect waste, or work at small shops to make ends meet. Their parents often do not fully understand the importance of education, which is why these children remained far from school gates.

When Chetna's outreach

workers and children associated with the center visited this community, they spoke to both children and their families about the Right to Education and its value. When asked why they didn't go to school, children often replied, "We don't know about school," or, "Distance, fees, and documents make it difficult."

But Chetna's team didn't stop at conversations. They met with parents, helped gather necessary documents, and even accompanied the children to schools for admission.



One such inspiring story is that of 13-year-old Supriya (name changed). A bright

child who always wanted to study but couldn't go to school due to family hardships. Chetna's team spoke to her parents, arranged all documents, and today Supriya is enrolled in Grade 6. The joy and confidence in her eyes as she attends school is clearly visible.

Another child from the same neighborhood, 10-year-old Ronnie (name changed), is now associated with the Chetna center as well. The workers helped with his documentation and, along with his parents, got him

admitted to the Badshahpur government school. Today, Ronnie is in Grade 3, and in his own words, he expresses heartfelt gratitude to Chetna. His parents proudly say, "We are very happy that someone is helping us so much."

Now, the impact of this effort is visible across the entire community. More children and their parents are becoming aware of the value of education. They visit schools with Chetna's team, speak to teachers, and are now taking active steps to secure a better future for their children.

A MEMORABLE REUNION: FORMER CHILD REPORTER AND BALAKNAMA EDITOR MEET

Talkative Reporter Satyam and Reporter Kishan

The lives of street and working children have seen many positive changes after getting associated with Badhte Kadam and the newspaper Balaknama. Most of these children now understand important aspects of life, and there has been a noticeable shift in their thinking.

Recently, during a Badhte Kadam team meeting, a heartwarming reunion took place — they met a former Balaknama "Batooni" (Talkative) reporter. This moment brought immense joy to both sides. The former child reporter, now known as 15-year-old Rahul, shared his inspiring life journey. Rahul has been living with his parents in a roadside settlement in Noida's Sector 62 for the past five years. When they first arrived, they knew no one and were unknown to others as well. Rahul's biggest concern was whether he would ever be able to resume his interrupted education.

A couple of months later, he came across the Nanhe Parinde mobile education van, where he met CHETNA organization's



outreach workers and shared his concerns. He had studied up to class 4 in his village but had to stop studying after moving to Noida. The team explained that the van was specially for children who were out of school or had dropped out for various reasons. Soon after, Rahul became part of Badhte Kadam and within a few months, learned about Balaknama. He participated in many group meetings, voiced his problems, and eventually became a Talkative Reporter for Balaknama. During this time, he was also admitted to class 5

and started attending school regularly.

Though his attendance at the Badhte Kadam meetings reduced over time, today, Rahul has completed class 8 and is in the process of getting admitted to class 9. He shared that moving to Noida and becoming part of Badhte Kadam transformed his life. Learning about Balaknama, becoming a reporter, and restarting his education felt like a dream come true.

Seeing this positive change, his parents are also very happy and continue to support him wholeheartedly.

CHILDREN'S LIVES BRIGHTENED THROUGH THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Reporter – Rajkishore, Gurugram, Talkative Reporter – Sonu

When reporter Rajkishore visited the settlements in the JMD area of Gurugram, he discovered numerous challenges that children living there face while trying to get admitted to school. These settlements are mainly inhabited by families who have migrated from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, and have been living here for many years. However, the biggest hurdle they face is the lack of proper documentation.

11-year-old Sonu shared, "We often don't have essential documents like Aadhaar cards, residence certificates, or birth certificates. Because of this, we can't benefit from government schemes. And when we go for school admission, the teachers say Aadhaar card is mandatory. It becomes very frustrating for us."

When a field worker from the NGO Chetna came to know about this, they took the issue seriously. The worker went to the school, spoke with the teachers, and explained that the future



of these children is directly tied to education. They requested that the children be given some time to arrange the necessary documents.

After multiple conversations and persistent efforts, the school administration finally agreed. With the help of Chetna, Sonu's essential documents were prepared, and he was successfully admitted to school. Sonu's happiness after getting admission was evident—his face lit up with joy.

This is not just Sonu's story, but the story of countless children who are kept away from education due to lack of documents. But when a committed social organization and a dedicated worker step in to help, the Right to Education truly becomes a beacon of hope, lighting up these children's lives.

THE SHADOW OF ADDICTION: HOW PARENTAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE ENDANGERS CHILDHOOD

Bureau Report

Every home has children — and children are, after all, just children. But if they are guided early on to understand right from wrong, why would they go astray? Unfortunately, in many homes today, when young children make small mistakes, parents fail to grasp their seriousness. Over time, these seemingly minor mistakes snowball into serious problems, leaving families struggling to cope.

We raise this issue because, during a recent visit by Balaknama child reporters to a settlement, a deeply troubling reality emerged during conversations with the children:

many of them are falling into substance abuse. Shockingly, it was revealed that parents themselves are playing a major role in this.

Take the case of 8-year-old Nutan (name changed), who is already caught in this web of addiction. She lives in a rented room in Noida with her parents, brother, and sister. Her mother works as domestic help and her father is a driver. Both parents are addicted to gutka (chewing tobacco), cigarettes, and alcohol.

Nutan shared that her mother consumes ₹50–₹70 worth of gutka every day and often hands over a few pinches to the children. What started as an occasional offer has now turned into a daily demand from



the children, and the mother no longer refuses.

She further revealed that both parents drink alcohol together every night while the children sit nearby on their bed. Her father has even introduced the children to alcohol — giving them a small cupful with the

explanation that it helps prevent cough and cold. He mixes it with Pepsi, claiming it reduces stomach discomfort.

What's more heartbreaking is that this isn't an isolated case. Nutan spoke of another young girl, just about 5 or 6 years old, in their neighborhood who drinks

alcohol at home under similar circumstances — pressured by her own parents.

The reporters were deeply disturbed by these revelations. They explained to the children that falling into bad company or habits slowly harms both the body and mind. They earnestly urged them to break free from these addictions and never repeat such behavior in the future.

This incident not only reflects the helplessness of the children and the negligence of the parents, but also serves as a stark reminder to all of us — that love, guidance, and responsible parenting are absolutely essential in shaping a child's future.

GIRL FALLS ILL FROM “MATA” OUTBREAK



Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Nagma

Jaipur's JDA Bapu Basti, a slum settlement, is once again struggling with filth and unhygienic conditions—just like every year. Living in these narrow lanes is difficult in itself, but when the unsanitary environment begins to affect children's health and education, the situation turns even more dire.

The children here not only go to school but also do small jobs like rag picking and street vending. However, the

same paths they take to work or school are lined with piles of garbage, roaring like lions as they invite disease. Due to this filth and stagnant dirty water, an outbreak of “Mata” (chickenpox) is spreading rapidly in the area.

Among the victims is 13-year-old Najma (name changed), a bright and curious student who moved to the area from Tonk with her family three years ago. She was preparing to appear for her Class 8 board exams this year, but the illness has confined her to bed. The same lane she

walked through daily to deliver lunch to her mother is now the reason for her sickness.

Najma's family lives in a rented house in a lane so poorly maintained that simply stepping out is a health risk. Now she lies on her bed, staring at the ceiling fan—the only thing in her room that seems to keep going. She's lost an entire academic year, and the pain is clearly visible on her pale face. Her father is already paralyzed, and now her younger sister has dropped out of school to take care of her.

The irony is bitter—Najma's mother works as a sweeper in a large private hospital, yet due to limited leave, she's unable to care for her daughter properly.

When the Baalnama reporter visited the area to assess the condition of other children, it was found that at least six more kids nearby were also suffering from chickenpox—just as their exams were approaching. For these working children, the roads may lead anywhere, but reaching school and succeeding in exams has become an uphill battle.

WHEN DETERMINATION TOOK FLIGHT WITH CHETNA'S SUPPORT – A YOUNG GIRL SECURES FIRST POSITION IN HER EXAM

Balaknama Reporter – Ritika

Kajal, a 12-year-old student studying at the Alternative Education Center run by the social organization Chetna in the Chakkarpur community of Gurugram, recently made everyone proud by securing first position in the Class 5 examination. Originally from Uttar Pradesh, Kajal lives with her family in Chakkarpur and is a regular student at Chetna's education center.

When a Balaknama reporter met Kajal, she shared the story of her success. Kajal said, “I used to study every morning and evening and prepared for my exams with full dedication. That's why I came first.”

When asked if anyone helped her in her studies, Kajal replied, “Chetna helped me a lot. They guided me continuously and supported me in my studies.”

Kajal was studying in Class 5 last year and has now been promoted to Class 6. After achieving first place in her class, she was honored throughout the school, which



made her parents extremely happy. The reporter wished Kajal continued success and encouraged her to keep working hard in her studies. Kajal expressed her dreams confidently, saying, “I will continue my studies and become a good teacher.” Chetna's contribution clearly proves that with proper guidance and dedication, every child can reach their goals.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH BEHIND THE COLORFUL SMILE OF AN INNOCENT CLOWN?

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Arjun

Not far from Agra Road in Jaipur, near a community center, lives 13-year-old Anuj (name changed) with his family in a small shack. To meet the basic needs of his life, this young boy dresses as a clown and entertains people. His colorful clothes and smiling face might bring joy to others, but behind that smile lies hidden pain and the heavy burden of responsibilities.

Every day, Anuj goes to streets, fairs, and parks, trying to make people laugh. The money he earns gets spent

on his own food, sometimes on medicines, and often on clothes for his younger siblings. Anuj once had the opportunity to go to school, but the harsh behavior and neglect from the teachers broke his spirit. He has now distanced himself from education and says, “Instead of being scolded and mocked at school, at least here people clap for me.”

Anuj's reality is not just a glimpse into the struggle of an underprivileged child, but also a reflection of the deep flaws in our education system and the harsh truth of child labor that still persists in our society.

A NIGHT OF FIRE TURNED THEIR WORLD TO ASHES

Reporter: Prince Kumar

Today, we share the story of children who face hardship almost every single day — and sometimes, tragedy strikes in the dead of night.

This report comes from Shakurpur slum in Delhi, where a devastating fire left several children and their families homeless in just one night. It was around 3 AM on April 9th when 11-year-old Sonu (name changed) had stepped out to fetch water from a nearby community due to a shortage in his own settlement.

As he returned, he saw flames engulfing the slum from all sides. Though terrified, he gathered courage and began shouting loudly to wake everyone up. He ran to his hut, pulled out his family members, lifted his younger siblings in

his arms, and led them to a safe place. Not stopping there, he even risked his life to pull out the gas cylinder from their burning home. In the process, Sonu suffered burns himself. Chaos spread across the slum as people screamed and tried to save what little they had. Sonu and his friends quickly dialed the fire brigade. The fire trucks arrived soon after and managed to douse the flames — but by then, 13 homes had turned to ash. Everything families owned was lost. That night, they slept under the

open sky on the platform, with nothing but the clothes on their backs.

Sonu told us that his school uniform and books were destroyed in the fire. As a result, he couldn't attend school for four days. He has barely eaten since, and his eyes reflect deep fear and uncertainty. “I don't know how long we'll have to live like this,” he says softly. This isn't just a tragic incident — it's a mirror to the reality we often overlook: children who brave unimaginable odds daily, and still hold on to hope.

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

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

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

DREAMS CRUSHED UNDER THE SHADOW OF FEAR

Talkative Reporter: Sonali
Reporter: Kishan

When news of accidents and crimes floods homes across India through media coverage, the deepest impact often falls on girls. In many households, such news transforms into fear—and that fear becomes a reason to impose restrictions on girls' freedom. For those stepping into adolescence, stepping outside the home often becomes forbidden. Their dreams are clipped before they even get a chance to take flight.

One such emotional story

was shared by 15-year-old Babita (name changed), who lives in a rented house with her parents in a settlement in Noida. With tears in her eyes and heaviness in her heart, she spoke of her situation:

“I'm 15 years old and live with my parents in a slum area of Noida. My father works as a daily wage laborer, and my mother does cleaning work in nearby homes. I love studying and have completed Class 8. But the school I attended only offered education up to that level. When I asked my father if I could continue my studies, he flatly refused.”

Her father's response was filled with worry: “Every day something terrible happens to some girl. How can I let you go to a school that's 10 kilometers away?”

While his concern is understandable, it has become a wall blocking his daughter's future. Babita says, “I'm angry, but I also understand my father's fear. Still, should fear force me to give up on my education? Don't my dreams matter?”

Now, a new fear has taken hold of her—that if she doesn't continue her studies soon, her father will begin talking about



her marriage within a few months. This raises a critical question: For a girl who wants to stand on her own feet and

shape her own future, will her path be filled only with fear and restrictions? Do her dreams truly hold no value?

TINY HANDS, BIG RISKS: CHILDREN TRIMMING TREES AMID ELECTRIC HAZARDS

Talkative Reporter Maniram and Reporter Kishan

In today's time of rising inflation, everyone needs to save money — but for street and working children, it has become a compulsion for survival. During a Badhte Kadam meeting with child reporters of Balaknama, a 13-year-old boy named Abul (name changed) shared a chilling truth about his life.

Abul lives with his family in a slum settlement in Noida. He revealed that his entire family earns their living by cutting down large trees that grow in streets, alleys, and open grounds. These trees often reach dangerously close to electrical wires, posing a high risk of electrocution. When electricity department workers come to repair these lines, they sometimes take children like



Abul along with them. These children are made to trim the branches of trees that are touching the wires.

The workers guide them on where to cut, and usually, the power supply is turned off beforehand to prevent accidents. For this risky work, the children are paid meagre wages — for example, ₹100 per hour — and even that depends on the mood of the worker. Often, they are made to work

without any payment.

Abul shared that while his elder brothers mainly do the heavy tree-cutting work, he also helps by cutting smaller trees. The cut wood is then carried by the brothers to sell in nearby shops. Most of the wood is wet, so it sells for far less than dry wood. While dry wood sells for ₹20–₹25 per kilo, wet wood fetches only about ₹3 per kilo. Some of the wood is also taken home to dry and later used as fuel for cooking.

Abul's account paints a stark picture of the harsh and hazardous life he leads at such a young age. At an age where he should be in school, he climbs trees near electric poles to help feed his family. The irony is that the very work of cutting trees — a dangerous and physically taxing job — is what puts food on their plates.

FORCED INTO CHILD LABOR DUE TO DEBT

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Dinesh



When Balaknama reporter Deepak visited the Hemnagar slum area of Jaipur to learn about the lives of street and working children, a heart-wrenching scene left him deeply shaken. On the way, he saw a 13-year-old boy carrying bricks. When he tried to speak with him, nearby adults stopped the conversation. A while later, the reporter made another attempt—and the story that unfolded was truly touching. The boy, Mahesh, shared that his family's financial condition is extremely poor. His father does not work and snatches away the little money his mother earns, spending it on alcohol. In his drunken state, he abuses and beats the family. To keep the household running and cover basic expenses, Mahesh's mother had taken a loan with interest. But when they

couldn't repay it on time, the debt kept growing. Eventually, the financial burden forced Mahesh to drop out of school. Now, with help from some relatives, he takes up whatever work he can find. For the past several days, he has been carrying bricks. The work is too heavy for his young body, and he often gets exhausted—but hunger leaves him with no choice. In a voice full of sadness and helplessness, Mahesh says, "If my father weren't addicted to alcohol, maybe today I'd be going to school too."

CHILDHOOD SCATTERED BY THE ROADSIDE

Talkative Reporter: Jyoti
Reporter: Kishan

When street-living or working children witness others their age begging or engaged in harsh labor under difficult conditions, it leaves a deep emotional impact. One such experience came to light during a visit by the Balaknama reporters' team to Noida's Sector 62.

There, they spoke to a 14-year-old girl named Suman (name changed), who is herself a working child. She not only shared her own story but also

spoke openly about the lives of other children around her.

Suman lives in a settlement where she and her mother run a small roadside shop. The shop sells tea, biscuits, chewing tobacco, and savory snacks. After school, Suman spends most of her time managing the shop, while her mother handles it earlier in the day. The shop is located near the "i-Zone" exam center, which attracts examinees from different states daily. On exam days, the area is quite crowded.

Suman explains that when she's at the shop, she often sees

many younger children—aged around 7 to 16—begging outside the exam center. These children arrive early in the morning and ask passersby for money. Some people give them money out of sympathy, thinking that helping poor children will bring them blessings. Others scold them or try to keep their distance.

Suman says that whenever these children come to her shop, she happily offers them something to eat or drink. But one day, a conversation with a young girl left her heart heavy. The girl, who came



from an extremely poor family and lived in a tarpaulin tent, said that her family had no permanent place to stay. They

could be forced to leave at any moment. That's why she came out to beg—just to help her family survive.

FORCED TO WORK WHEN HE SHOULD BE PLAYING: VIJAY'S STORY

Balaknama Reporter: Asif Ansari

At an age when children are supposed to play and attend school, 13-year-old Vijay (name changed) bears the weight of his entire household. In a conversation with Balaknama reporter Asif, Vijay shared that he hails from Bihar. Due to internal family disputes, his family had to relocate to Delhi.

Both of Vijay's parents are differently abled and unable to work. His father occasionally begs near the Kirti Nagar police station, but the meager amount he earns is far from enough to sustain the family. As a result, Vijay is forced to work at a roadside eatery in Delhi, washing dishes to help make ends meet.

Vijay recounted how, during police inspections, the dhaba owner sometimes dismisses him to avoid trouble, only to later rehire him out of pity. He says that whenever he sees other children going to school, a wave of longing



washes over him — he dreams of becoming a doctor someday. However, the burden of responsibility keeps him away from school. Despite his own struggles, Vijay hopes that his younger brother gets an education and becomes a successful person. He dreams that one day, his brother might help him return to school too.

As a Balaknama reporter, I, Asif Ansari, appeal to everyone: child labor must end — so that children like Vijay are given a fair chance at education, dignity, and a bright future.

HEAVY LIVES FOR LOW RENT: CHILDHOOD IN THE SLUMS

Talkative Reporter: Noor
Reporter: Kishan

When street-dwelling or working children cannot afford room rent, they are forced to build makeshift shelters in nearby slum areas. Often, when journalists visit these slums, they note that the children living there wear dirty and torn clothes. Even their bodies are not clean. But when one reporter saw the reality with their own eyes during a visit to a slum, the scene left them deeply shaken.

The reporter spoke to several children in detail. A 14-year-old boy named Ram (name changed) shared that there are about 20 to 25 huts in his slum. But there is no proper place to wash dishes, no area for laundry, and no toilet or bathing facility. Most residents of the slum work as rag pickers. Sometimes when they go out collecting scrap, they find large pieces



of thermocol. They repurpose these thermocol boxes as makeshift tubs for washing dishes.

Washing clothes, however, is much more challenging. Soap doesn't lather well, and clothes don't get cleaned properly in these makeshift containers. The biggest issue, Ram explains, is that there's no proper place to throw dirty water. As a result, the children

are often forced to wash all their clothes using just one bucket of water—whether the clothes are actually cleaned or not.

The slum severely lacks basic amenities, which is likely why very few people live there. But those who do, stay because the rent is extremely low—and to save that money, they endure all these hardships.



THERE'S A SOLUTION TO EVERY PROBLEM

Talkative Reporter: Ayush,
Balaknama Reporter: Kishan

There is no problem without a solution—sometimes we simply don't know where to look. Balaknama reporters were reminded of this truth during a recent visit to slum settlements in West Delhi. There, they met an 8-year-old boy named Mohan (name changed), who openly and innocently shared the challenges he had faced.

Mohan originally came from Bihar, where he had been attending school regularly. But when his family migrated to Delhi, everything changed. The new environment was unfamiliar, and he had no understanding of the city or its education system. Thankfully, some children from the neighborhood helped him get admitted to the first grade. Mohan was thrilled—he began going to school regularly and was filled with excitement.

But this joy was short-lived. As exam time approached, his teachers

started asking him repeatedly to open a bank account. Mohan, confused and unaware of what a “bank account” was or why it mattered, turned to his parents for help. Unfortunately, they too had no idea. When they went to the bank, the complicated procedures and unclear instructions left them overwhelmed and disheartened.

Just as they were losing hope, they came across field workers from CHETNA. The team listened attentively to Mohan and his parents, and quickly connected them to the Badte Kadam network. The family shared that because of this banking issue, they were considering pulling Mohan out of school. But the CHETNA team didn't give up. They accompanied the family to the bank, guided them step-by-step through the process, and successfully helped Mohan open his account. Today, Mohan not only attends school regularly but does so with renewed confidence and joy.

A CHILDHOOD BURIED UNDER THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Talkative Reporter: Abhishek,
Balaknama Reporter: Kishan

Many children wish to continue their education, but the burden of household responsibilities and family hardships often forces them to give up their dreams. One such story emerged when the Balaknama team visited a slum in Noida and met a 10-year-old boy named Rohan (name changed), who shared the difficult reality of his life.

Until five months ago, Rohan was a regular school-going child. He had completed class 3 and was preparing for his class 4 final exams. But just before the exams, tragedy struck—his father suffered a paralytic stroke in his right leg. His father used to drive a battery rickshaw and, in a courageous attempt to save a passerby on the road, his rickshaw overturned, severely



injuring his leg and resulting in paralysis.

From that day on, everything changed. His father became bedridden and unable to work. The family's only income now comes from his mother, who works as a domestic helper. With the little money she

earns, they barely make ends meet. The responsibility of caring for his paralyzed father—feeding him, helping him move—along with looking after his three-year-old sister, has fallen entirely on young Rohan's shoulders.

Rohan longs to return to school, but circumstances simply don't allow it. When we spoke with him, we encouraged him not to give up on his education permanently. We explained that as soon as his father's condition improves even slightly, he should try returning to school. We also advised him to visit the school along with his father, share the situation with the teachers, and seek re-enrollment.

This child carries a heavy load far beyond his years, but with a little support, his dreams of education might still find a way forward.

SOARING ON WINGS OF HOPE THROUGH THE LIGHT OF EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter Deepak and
Talkative Reporter Ayesha

A Balaknama reporter recently visited the Jamdoli informal settlement in Jaipur, where he met a 10-year-old girl named Ameesha (name changed). Ameesha shared that she began helping her family financially at a very young age by working on stone-setting in bangles. She would sit for hours using her tiny fingers to do the intricate work—leaving no time or opportunity for her to attend school.

She explained that her parents were not aware of the importance of education, and since she was the quickest and most efficient at the work, no one in the family ever thought



of sending her to school. The desire to study first arose in her when she saw other children from the settlement going to a CHETNA educational center. She too wished she could join them.

For a few days, she started accompanying the children to the center. It was there that a CHETNA team member spoke

to her parents and explained that without education, Ameesha's future could remain uncertain. Their words struck a chord with her parents, who then made the decision to send her to school.

Today, Ameesha is a regular student and is currently studying in Grade 2. She is deeply interested in learning—particularly fond of Hindi and drawing. With a smile on her face, she says, “I love going to school. I want to study hard and become a big officer one day.”

Even now, on holidays, she continues to help at home by setting stones in bangles, but her heart is set on education. Her dream now is to be one of the top students in class.

CHILDREN RISKING THEIR LIVES TO KEEP THEIR HOMES RUNNING

Talkative Reporter: Sunny &
Reporter: Kishan

During visits to various areas of Noida, Balaknama reporters often witness a recurring sight—large open spaces surrounded by towering buildings under construction. The debris from these construction sites is frequently dumped on these vacant lands.

In a slum cluster near Sector 62, 14-year-old Veer (name changed) shared a troubling reality. He and many other children from roadside settlements risk their lives every day to scavenge through this debris. Every morning, afternoon, and evening, they venture out to fetch water and keep an eye on the vacant lot nearby—a place where construction waste is routinely unloaded.

Around 20 children, aged



between 7 and 14, gather there daily, starting as early as 7 AM. They await the arrival of a tractor carrying fresh debris. The moment they spot the tractor from a distance, they rush toward it and scramble to climb onto it, hoping to retrieve pieces of iron rods, aluminum, plastic, or anything that can be sold for a few rupees.

In their desperate attempt, many fall off the tractor, often sustaining serious injuries. They pick through the rubble

with their bare hands, without any tools or protective gear. Sharp fragments hidden in the debris frequently cut their hands, yet the children do not stop—driven by the urgent need to support their families and fulfill their basic needs.

No adults supervise or ensure their safety. These children, unseen and unheard, take on immense physical risk daily—not for toys or snacks—but to survive.

WHERE CHILDHOOD LEARNS AND EARNS TOO

Balaknama Reporter: Damini,
Talkative Reporter: Rohit

A Balaknama reporter recently visited the Hasanpura Bhatta slum in Jaipur. During the visit, the reporter noticed a 12-year-old boy, Mohit (name changed), working at a small grocery shop. Curious, the reporter began a conversation with him, asking about his name, family, and studies.

With a gentle smile, Mohit shared, “My name is Mohit. I study in Grade 6. I have two elder sisters and one younger brother.” He went on to explain that alongside his schooling, he also helps his father with the family shop. Whenever his father goes to the market to purchase items for the store, Mohit takes over and manages the counter.

Because of the family's limited income, they cannot afford to buy stock in bulk,



so supplies are purchased as needed. Every day, Mohit spends two to three hours at the shop assisting his father. With pride in his voice, he says, “Papa tells me that now that I've learned to read, I can make bills and write down the item lists—it makes his work easier. Hearing that makes me really happy.”

Mohit understands that even his small efforts carry great significance for his family. His words reflect not only a strong sense of responsibility, but also deep respect and support for his father.

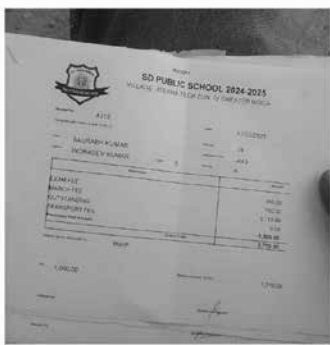
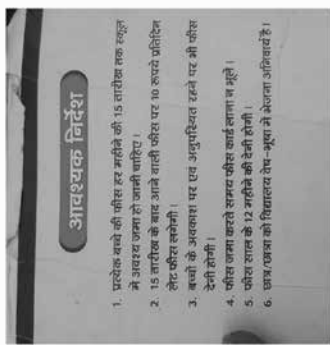
CHILDREN'S DREAMS OF EDUCATION STRUGGLE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF POVERTY

Bureau Report

Street and working children often do not feel secure or at ease in their day-to-day lives due to their economic conditions. They face a constant series of challenges and hardships. Recently, journalists from Balaknama newspaper visited some settlements in Noida and interacted with the children living there.

During these conversations, when the children were asked about their schooling, a 13-year-old boy named Paban (name changed) shared his story. He said that for several years, he had been living with his parents in a village near the Char Murti area of Noida. He used to attend a nearby private school, but he has now stopped going.

Paban explained that the school had very strict rules along with the admission. The monthly fees had to be paid on a fixed date, and any delay attracted a penalty of ₹10 per day. Even taking a leave from school would lead to a fine. Initially, the family did not fully understand these rules, but as time went on, the situation worsened.



Sometimes, Paban's father wouldn't receive his wages on time, which made it difficult to pay the school fees punctually. As a result, the fines kept piling up. Teachers would constantly remind him about the growing dues and often humiliate him in front of other students for not paying the fees. When Paban went to pay, he was asked to pay an additional month's fees as penalty. If he couldn't

pay, he was subjected to insulting comments.

Emotionally exhausted by this cycle of humiliation and pressure, Paban finally dropped out of school. He now stays at home. However, the biggest issue he faces is that the school is refusing to issue his transfer certificate. Without it, he cannot get admission to another school, leaving his future hanging in uncertainty.



WHEN CHILDHOOD GROWS UP UNDER THE SHADOW OF WORK

Talkative Reporter Joan and Balaknama Reporter Kishan

As you walk through streets and neighborhoods, it's not uncommon to see laborers carrying out construction work. What often goes unnoticed, however, is that many of these workers bring along their young children to these sites. Raj (name changed), a 13-year-old boy living in a settlement near a village in Noida, shares that most people in his neighborhood work as construction laborers. Every day, he takes lunch to his parents and often sees several children—ranging from 1 to 12 years of age—accompanying their parents to work. In a conversation on this topic, 12-year-old Mausami (name changed) said that while very young children, between the ages of 1 and 6, are still too small to understand much, those aged 6 to 12 start becoming aware of their surroundings. These older

children often take care of their younger siblings. That's one of the main reasons parents bring them along to work. The environment at home or in the settlement isn't always safe, and children can easily get into fights while playing—small arguments sometimes turn into big conflicts. While their parents work, these children take care of their younger siblings. Once the little ones fall asleep, they even help their parents with light household tasks. Mausami also shared that when the construction work is on contract, the pressure on parents increases. In such cases, they involve their children in the labor too—helping move bricks, cement, and smaller items to speed up the work.

This is how children grow up—working for their families, trying to shoulder responsibilities far beyond their age. But in doing so, their innocence and childhood slowly slip away, unnoticed.



NEGLECT OF A PIT IN THE SETTLEMENT POSES A GROWING THREAT TO CHILDREN

Talkative Reporter Sahana and Balaknama Reporter Kishan

Life has become increasingly difficult for the residents—especially the children—after a large pit was dug on the edge of a settlement. Located in an open ground, this pit not only obstructs the path but has also become the cause of daily problems for the community.

Children living in the area shared that there are over fifty settlements nearby, and the owner of the field next to one such settlement is responsible for digging the pit, which is both deep and wide. Dirty water, sewage, and waste from the settlement collect in the pit, causing a constant foul smell. This makes it extremely difficult for nearby families to live, cook, or eat in peace.

What worries the children

the most is the safety of their younger siblings. Since their parents leave for work and often leave them in charge, they live in constant fear that one of the younger children might fall into the pit. In fact, several children have already fallen into it in the past, and have had to be rescued. The concern is that if timely help isn't available, such accidents could become fatal.

There is no tin sheet or any kind of safety barrier placed over the pit, which only increases the danger. The garbage and stagnant water surrounding it continue to spread, raising the risk of disease outbreaks in the area.

This situation is not only extremely inconvenient for children but has also become a serious threat to their safety and lives.

ON MOTHER'S DAY, CHILDREN DID SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR THEIR MOMS

Balaknama Reporter – Damini Talkative Reporter – Deepika

Mother's Day is a special occasion to express respect and gratitude towards our mothers. This year, children from the Jaysinghpura Khor settlement in Jaipur celebrated the day wholeheartedly. It turned out to be especially meaningful for street-connected and working children.

Children associated with the Chetna Education Centre made the day memorable by celebrating it with their mothers. In their daily hustle, children often don't get quality time with their mothers, but this day gave them a chance to



strengthen their bond.

Many children started saving money days in advance to prepare surprises in their own unique ways—some brought cakes to celebrate with their moms, while others expressed their emotions through handmade greeting cards, paper flowers, and drawings.

11-year-old Deepika shared with a smile, "We bought a gift

for mom and even cut a cake. Mom said it felt like it was her birthday. Something like this had never happened before."

Meanwhile, 13-year-old Siya said, "Earlier, we didn't even know about Mother's Day, Girls' Day, or Children's Day. But after joining the Chetna Education Centre, we learned about all this and began to understand how much our mothers do for us. Now we feel we should do something for them too."

For these children, the day became a celebration of love, connection, and responsibility—an opportunity to understand the depth of the mother-child relationship.

WATER CRISIS DERAILING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Balaknama Reporter – Deepak Talkative Reporter – Vishal

Balaknama reporter Deepak recently visited various informal settlements in Jaipur and spoke with children to understand their experiences. During this visit, he met 12-year-old Vishal in the Lakhesra settlement. Vishal shared that most children from the area walk nearly two kilometers early every morning to a nearby pond, which prevents them from reaching school on time.

The main reason behind this is the severe water crisis in the settlement. Due to the lack



of water, even parents do not stop their children from going to the pond, as the children also catch fish there and bathe at the same time. Sometimes, they even get food there, reducing the worry of preparing meals at home.

This shortage of water and lack of employment is forcing many families to migrate from the area. Children's education is one

of the worst-affected aspects of this situation. The pond—located about two kilometers from the settlement—has now become the biggest barrier to education. Instead of going to school, children spend the entire day catching fish at the pond.

Because of the easy access to water and the open surroundings, children prefer spending their time there. They cook and eat the fish they catch, and some even keep smaller fish in bottles or buckets as pets.

In reality, this routine is drawing children away from education and pushing their future into uncertainty.

BEENA'S JOURNEY ON THE PATH OF HOPE

**Talkative Reporter Reshma,
Balaknama Reporter Kishan**

When the most responsible member of a family is no longer present, the home begins to fall apart and new problems emerge every day. Beena (name changed), a 14-year-old girl living in a slum in West Delhi, openly shared the scattered story of her life.

Originally from Bihar, Beena recounted how her family was once happy, but then

how life's difficulties completely changed everything. Four years ago, they lived in their village with the entire family—three sisters, two brothers, and their parents. Her father worked in Delhi, while farming took place in the village. However, one day her father's health suddenly deteriorated. He returned to the village, and all their savings were spent on his treatment. Despite all efforts, he passed away.

After her father's death, the

family's condition worsened drastically—even arranging daily meals became a struggle. The school was far from home, so Beena also attended tuition to continue her education. Following her father's demise, her maternal aunt called the family to Delhi and helped her mother and elder sisters get work in a factory. Life felt like it had come to a standstill—Beena felt that nothing good could happen anymore and that her life would pass by in



sorrow.

But one day, she saw her cousin carrying a school bag. He said he studied at "CHETNA," and that sparked something in her. Beena visited the organization, shared her story, and joined CHETNA.

Today, Beena is a member of the Badhte Kadam group, she is studying, and currently in Class 5. She dreams of learning beauty parlour skills so she can bring happiness to her home.

Beena's story teaches us that with the right support and hope, even the darkest corners of life can be filled with light.

HOLDING ONTO THEIR DREAMS, CHILDREN FULFILL THEIR WISH TO SWIM

**Balaknama Reporter –
Damini Talkative Reporter –
Sohin**

To understand the experiences of street-connected and working children, a Balaknama reporter visited several informal settlements in Jaipur. During the visit, an inspiring story came to light. While most children spent their summer holidays relaxing and having fun, a few children from these settlements chose a different path.

By limiting their small desires and daily comforts—like candies, ice creams, and games—these children set a beautiful example of determination. They saved every penny to fulfill their dream of swimming in a real pool.

When the reporter spoke with children from the Jaysinghpura Khor settlement in Jaipur, they shared, "We saved for several weeks. We didn't buy toffees or ice creams and spent less on games, just so we could enjoy swimming."



Once they had collected enough money, the children excitedly visited a nearby public swimming pool and joyfully experienced swimming for the first time. When asked about the pool charges, they said it cost ₹100 per person for two hours.

Their story is truly heartwarming. It shows that even with limited means, dreams can come true if there is strong will and thoughtful planning.

MOCK DRILL BECOMES A LIFESAVING PRACTICE FOR STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN

**Balaknama Reporter: Saberul
Talkative Reporter: Sumit**

The growing tension along the India-Pakistan border and the continuous military activities have created an atmosphere of concern and instability across the country. In such times, it is crucial to prepare not only youth but also children to deal with emergency situations.

With this aim, a special mock drill was organized for street and working children at a state-run child protection centre. This exercise was conducted as a joint initiative by the District Disaster Management Authority and a leading voluntary organization. Children aged between 8 and 14 years participated in the drill. They were taught practical survival techniques for disaster scenarios such as air raids, bomb blasts, gas leaks, fires, and building collapses. The drill began with the loud sound of a siren, signaling the children to stay alert. They were then trained on how to protect their head and neck in



open areas, how to reach a safe location without panicking, and how to administer first aid with limited resources. Trainers divided the children into groups and had them practice rescue operations. This included training on how to use firefighting equipment and basic Red Cross techniques.

A representative of the voluntary organization said, "Our goal is not just to conduct a mock drill, but to mentally empower children so they can respond wisely in any disaster. The most vulnerable are often those who are untrained." Sumit, a 14-year-old who

attends school regularly, shared after the drill, "Earlier, we used to feel very scared, but now we know what to do if a disaster happens. We understand our responsibility to protect ourselves and others." This mock drill was more than just a practice—it delivered a powerful social message: preparing children, who are considered the future of the nation, to face any situation with courage and presence of mind is the need of the hour. Such initiatives inspire children to live bravely and wisely, even in situations as dire as war.

BADHTE KADAM' FEDERATION HELPS A CHILD FIND HIS VOICE – LEARNS HINDI AND GAINS CONFIDENCE

**Reporter: Rajkishor
Talkative Reporter: Lakshmi**

Balaknama reporter Rajkishor was once conducting a reporter meeting in the Nirvana Country community in Gurugram. During the session, there was an ongoing conversation with children. At that moment, Ahsan, the leader of the 'Badhte Kadam' group, shared the story of a child.

Ahsan said that a boy had recently come to live in their settlement, and he did not know any Hindi at all. He couldn't speak, read, write, or understand Hindi. Because of this, he mostly



stayed at home and couldn't make any friends. The other children couldn't understand what he said, and he couldn't understand them either. Gradually, the boy became

isolated and sad.

That's when Ahsan and some of his friends decided to help him. They welcomed him into their group. Within a few days, the child

started to open up, began understanding bits of what they were saying, and slowly started trying to express himself. Step by step, he began learning many Hindi words.

The group also started taking him to CHETNA's education centre and informed the social worker there about his language difficulty. The social worker spoke to the boy's parents, and soon he began attending the centre regularly. He is now learning Hindi.

Today, he has made several good friends who support him. He also tries to speak in Hindi, understands

what others are saying, and expresses his thoughts. He now studies regularly at the centre, which has helped him a lot.

If he continues in this environment for some more time, he will surely become fluent in Hindi and overcome all his language barriers. His parents are now very happy to see the progress he is making. They now wish to get him admitted to a school nearby so that his overall development can continue.

The efforts made by all the members of the 'Badhte Kadam' group in supporting this child are truly commendable.

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.