

BALAKNAMA

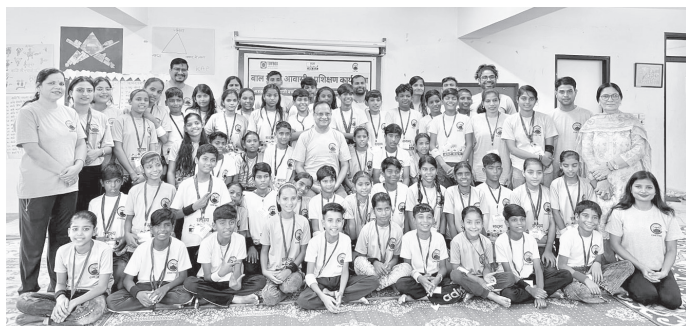
UNIQUE NEWSPAPER FOR AND BY STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN

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.

EMPOWERING STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN A FIVE-DAY RESIDENTIAL WORKSHOP

Balaknama Reporters: Kishan & Rajkishore

Like every year, Chetna Organization organized a five-day residential leadership development workshop for children at Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Kukas, Jaipur in the month of October. A total of 138 children participated — 47 from Jaipur, 37 from Delhi, and 54 from Gurugram. The main aim of this workshop was to enhance leadership, teamwork, confidence, and creativity among children. Over five days, through games, drama, discussions, and creative activities, the participants learned about child rights, laws related to children, dreams, and the challenges they face in achieving them. Activities like the Balloon Game, Rights of Boys and Girls, Dream World, and Current Situation gave children the space to express their ideas and emotions freely through drama, drawing, collage, and dialogue. They were also informed about child protection mechanisms such as the Child Welfare



Committee (CWC), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), and Childline 1098, and how these bodies support children in need. A special feature of this year's workshop was a music session, where children got the opportunity to learn and enjoy music. On the first day, children and Chetna team members from Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, and Jaipur began their journey in the morning and reached Kukas by noon. During the travel, they sang songs and danced together. On arrival, they were warmly welcomed, given shoe kits, and allotted rooms. The day concluded with an evening of fun and entertainment before everyone retired to their rooms. The second day

began with morning prayer and introductions. Children were divided into two groups — one learning through activities and the other through music. They made their own workshop rules such as listening carefully, avoiding mischief, keeping the surroundings clean, not wasting food, protecting plants, and taking care of their rooms. Later, different committees were formed — cleanliness, food, health, discipline, and entertainment — to help every child understand responsibility and teamwork. Through the Balloon Activity, children reflected on the current situation of street and working children. They shared that many children sell balloons,



flowers, or vegetables, collect scrap, and are often deprived of education due to lack of documents or financial problems. Sadness and struggle outweighed happiness in their stories. Divided into four groups, children then presented their problems and dreams through drawings, collages, skits, and mono-acting. In their dream world, children envisioned themselves going to school, eating good food, playing games, receiving love from their parents, and living happily. In the evening, they played Kho-Kho and Kabaddi before ending the day. On the third day, they discussed what makes a good leader. The children said a leader should be honest, educated,

wise, helpful, and supportive of others. They also learned about Balaknama and Badhte Kadam processes and gained a deeper understanding of the four major child rights — Right to Survival, Right to Development, Right to Protection, and Right to Participation. The fourth day began with a group photo session. Through drama, children were taught how law-related institutions like the CWC, DCPU, Police, Doctors, and Helpline Numbers assist children in need. Meanwhile, music sessions for interested children continued alongside. The final day featured a cultural program, where groups presented quiz

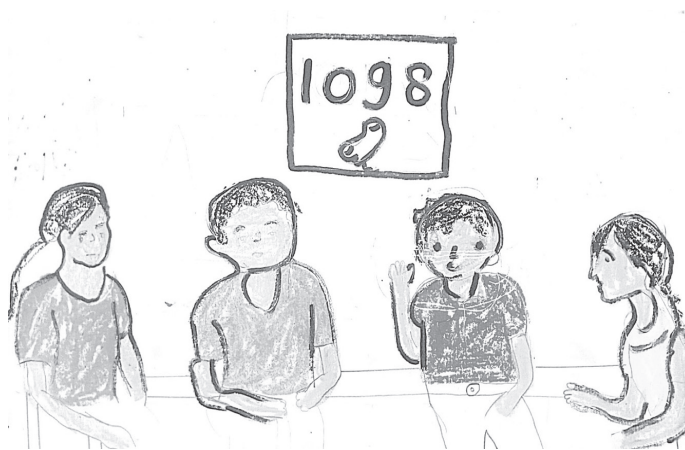
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CHILDLINE STORIES THROUGH THE VOICES OF WORKING CHILDREN

Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Mayra

1098 CHILDLINE service is active 24 hours a day across the country for the safety and support of children. This helpline not only provides assistance to children in emergency situations, but also makes them aware of their rights. It is equally important to understand what experiences working children or children living in difficult circumstances have had with this service. In this context, Balaknama reporter Damini visited JDA Bapu Basti in Jaipur and interacted with children there. During

the discussion, 12-year-old boy Keshav (name changed) shared: "I once called 1098 just to check whether it really helps or if it is just a number. When I called, they spoke to me very nicely and asked me about my problem. I said that I had just called to know whether this number works. Then they told me that I can call anytime for any problem or information. I felt very good and my trust in this service became even stronger." Similarly, 13-year-old girl Mayra (name changed) shared her experience: "Due to family problems, I could not appear in two papers of my Class 9



annual exam and because of that my name was removed from school. But I wanted to continue my studies. When I applied for admission in the senior secondary

school, the principal and admission in-charge refused to admit me without giving any reason. Workers from Chetna organisation went to

the school several times, but no solution could be found. After that I called 1098 and explained my problem and shared all the details. The Childline staff listened to me carefully and contacted the school principal. The next day I got a call informing me that I can go back to the school and take admission. When I went, my admission was done. I felt very happy." These experiences clearly show that children are now becoming aware of their rights. Childline information is also reaching street and working children, and they are using this service to resolve their problems.

FREE HEALTH CAMP BOOSTS HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG CHILDREN



Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor
Talkative Reporter: Ritika

Children living in various slum settlements of Gurugram shared that due to unhygienic surroundings and filth, diseases spread frequently and many people fall sick again and again. Keeping this problem in mind, the social organisation Chetna has organised free health check-up camps for these children, which are proving to be very

beneficial. According to the children, through this health camp they receive free health check-ups from time to time. For common illnesses, medicines are provided on the spot, while in case of serious ailments, doctors advise them to go to the hospital for further treatment. Because of this, children are able to receive timely treatment and prevent illnesses. Qualified and trained doctors in the health camps not only

conduct examinations, but also inform children about disease prevention and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Doctors advised children to eat nutritious and balanced food, avoid fried and junk foods, do regular yoga or PT (exercise), maintain personal hygiene, take daily baths, brush teeth and keep their surroundings clean. They also cautioned them to avoid excessive mobile phone use, as it negatively affects mental health. According to the children, these health camps have increased their awareness about cleanliness, disease prevention and healthy habits. Now they are able to protect themselves from illnesses, and their physical and mental health is improving. Chetna organisation is continuously working for the holistic development of children. Children shared that earlier their families would seek treatment only in serious conditions, but now due to regular health check-ups, their health is seeing positive changes.



CHILD INJURED AFTER FALLING INTO POTHOLE

Balaknama Reporter: Ritika
Talkative Reporter: Ankush

The rainy season has increased difficulties for people in the Chakkarpur community of Gurugram. Water-filled potholes everywhere have made movement difficult for both children and adults. When Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the area, she interacted with local children and families. 13-year-old Kush (name changed) shared: "During rains, these pits fill with water. The water level becomes so high that the pits are not visible at all, and people unknowingly fall into them." He shared that on the evening of 4th August around 7:30 pm, during heavy rain, many people slipped and fell into these pits. Kush said in a sad

voice, "My mother also fell into one pit that day. She struggled a lot to get out, and now she is unwell. She hasn't been able to go to work for the last two-three days." Kush also shared that not only his mother, but 3-4 other children have also fallen into these pits and have become sick. When asked why there are so many pits, the children said: "Sewer water collects here every day. Road construction work is going on, but because of continuous rain, the water and mud keeps increasing." These open and water-filled pits during the rainy season have become a major safety hazard for children, women and the elderly. Local residents say that if these pits are not filled soon and the road is not properly repaired, accidents may increase further.

STENCH AND UNCLEAR SURROUNDINGS DISTRESS STREET & WORKING CHILDREN



Balaknama Reporter: Rajkishor
Talkative Reporter: Aditya

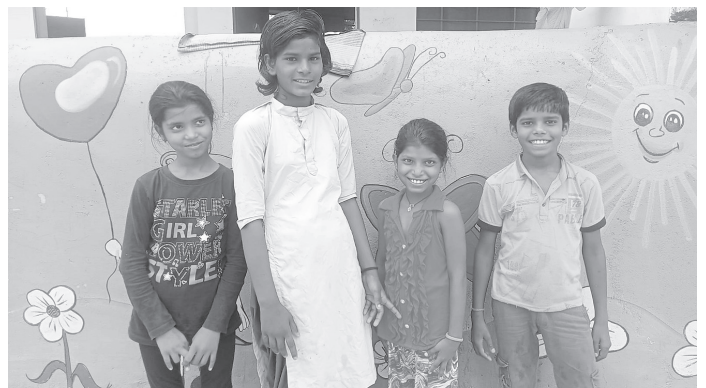
Street-connected and working children living in Palra settlement of Gurugram are extremely disturbed these days by heavy filth and a strong foul smell. When Balaknama reporter Rajkishor and Batuni reporter Aditya visited the community and spoke to the children, they shared their serious concern. Children said that there is a place near the settlement where people throw garbage. Especially meat and fish sellers dump their spoiled and rotten waste there. When this waste starts decaying, such a strong smell spreads in the surroundings that it becomes difficult to even stand there. Many children said that because of this smell, they cannot even pass through that route. When the reporter team inspected the spot, they found that the children's complaint was absolutely true. Large amounts

of garbage were piled up, dirty water was collected in several places, and there were flies everywhere. Local residents shared that there is no proper system of waste disposal in the settlement, so people are forced to dump garbage on the same heap. Residents say that due to the absence of a proper waste management system, the filth continues to increase, putting the health of children and families at risk. Because of the foul smell and garbage, it has become difficult even for children to pass through that area. People have appealed to the authorities to ensure regular cleaning in the settlement and provide a proper place for waste disposal, so that children and families can get relief from this serious problem.

LIFE SKILLS SESSION HIGHLIGHTS HEALTHY DIET, JUNK FOOD RISKS

Balaknama Reporter: Raj Kishor

The Life Skills workshop organised in the settlements of Gurugram helped children understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and proper eating habits. Children shared that through these workshops, they learned useful information about balanced diet, the significance of nutrition, and the dangers of junk food. According to the children, the workshops explained that a balanced diet is one that contains all the essential nutrients required by the body—proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates. Trainers also taught children correct habits of eating food and drinking water. For example — food should be eaten slowly and chewed properly; one should not drink too much water while eating; water should always be



drunk while sitting and sip-by-sip; breakfast should be taken by 8 am and lunch between 12 to 1 pm. Mobile phones should not be used while eating and stale food should never be eaten. The workshop also explained that nutritious food is extremely important for the physical and mental development of children. On the other hand, junk food lacks

nutrients. Excess consumption of junk food increases the risk of serious diseases like obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, which can negatively impact the overall development of children. Children said that this workshop has increased their awareness about nutritious food, and now they will try to avoid junk food and adopt healthier eating habits.

LEARNING BRINGS JOY TO A YOUNG GIRL

Talkative Reporter: Misty &
Reporter: Kishan

Street-connected children walk to school every day, but among them, the happiness on the face of a 13-year-old girl was very special and unique. When reporters were talking to children in a Delhi settlement, trying to understand their issues, this girl started sharing the joy she felt about her studies. She told

that she currently lives in the slums of West Delhi with her parents. Earlier she lived in her village and studied there, but due to some reasons her father brought her to Delhi, and after that her education got interrupted. Till then she had only studied up to 4th class. After coming to Delhi, amid daily struggles, her school got left behind, and her time started getting spent in household work and playing. During this

time one day she met the team members of the organisation Chetna. They took information about her, and when they got to know that her education had stopped, they linked her to the "Badhte Kadam" programme. Within a few days she got admission in 5th class. The girl said that now she has reached



6th class and she scored 510 marks out of 600 in 5th. She felt very happy with this achievement. Her family also felt proud of her success and her school teachers congratulated and appreciated her.

COLORFUL CARTOON CARDS BECOME CHILDREN'S NEW FAVORITE GAME

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Kajal

Balaknama reporter visited Bagranā kachchi basti in Jaipur. There, "Talkative Reporter" Kajal shared that children in her settlement have started playing a new game. In this game children play with cards that have cartoon pictures printed on them. The characters shown in the picture have to be matched with the colourful card sets. These cards are not expensive at all — and not dangerous like mobile games. This is a traditional type of "cartoon picture card game" which the children themselves collect, sort, and exchange with each other as they play. Parents often buy 10 or 20 rupees worth of card packs for them — which keeps the children engaged for hours, sitting



together quietly, and they don't use mobile phones during this time. Children said this is their favourite game because they enjoy it and it doesn't require a mobile phone or any electronic gadget. One child smilingly said, "We play with cards — they have superheroes. Sometimes we match numbers, sometimes we do battles." In this game there is neither loss nor victory — only friendship, a way to spend time, and lots of imagination.

DREAMS REALIZED: STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN ENROLL IN SCHOOL

Bureau Report

At the alternative education center in JDA Bapu Basti, Vidyadhar Nagar, Jaipur, five children went to school for the first time. All five children work—some make shoelaces at home, some collect scrap—and none have Aadhaar cards. Due to lack of documents and low academic level, it was not possible for them to sit in school.

Although their documents still could not be made, the school spoke to them, recognized their abilities and leadership qualities, and allowed them to sit in classes and study. This transformation became possible after the children got alternative education and attended life-skills workshops, where they learned about personal hygiene, laws, and child rights.



For the first time, they were able to experience school routine and happiness. They now prepare themselves early in the morning to go to school.

11-year-old Anandi says: "I drop my sister at the Anganwadi, then sit in Class 4 and study. I already knew how to read Hindi, so I got a chance to sit in Class 4."

Similarly, 9-year-old Kartik

(name changed), who collects scrap, says: "Madam makes us recite ABCD there, and we also get food." The children don't know how long they will be allowed to sit in school without names, but they hope their documents will be arranged soon. For now, they are extremely happy and want to take handmade crafts to their Principal as a thank-you gift.

CREATIVE TEACHERS' DAY CELEBRATION BY STREET & WORKING CHILDREN



Balaknama Reporter: Damini

The greatest reward for teachers is that their students remember them throughout life and make commendable contributions to their families, society, and the nation. With this sentiment, over time, the bond between street-connected and working children and their teachers has deepened. This warm relationship was beautifully evident at various alternative education centres run by Chetna Organisation, where children enthusiastically celebrated Teachers' Day with their respective teachers. In some centres, children welcomed teachers at the centre by garlanding them and cutting cakes, while in other places, children went to school and gifted handmade greeting cards, bouquets, photo frames, school models, and other creative items. At several centres, children also organised a teacher-child fair, where they role-played as teachers, humorously yet seriously portraying challenges such as teachers being occupied with other duties or children not receiving class-appropriate levels. They concluded with

a message that if teachers and students collaborate in group work, many challenges can be easily managed. Seeing these little teachers in action brought immense joy and enthusiasm to the actual teachers. One teacher laughed, saying, "Today we will eat the cake with our copycats themselves." When asked why they chose their favourite teachers, children

gave innocent answers. 12-year-old Anshu said, "I like it when my teachers teach me lovingly and humorously in our local language." Teachers and principals of government schools acknowledged that earlier they considered these children different and teaching them was challenging, but over time, seeing the positive changes in the children brought happiness. Teacher Ratnaji shared that Chetna Organisation works on the holistic development of children, and a new enthusiasm for learning is visible in them. Children expressed love and closeness with their educators by giving hand and finger prints. All these activities reflect that a strong thread of love, respect, and dedication is developing between children and teachers.

CHILDREN'S BANK ACCOUNTS OPENED IN SETTLEMENTS; BENEFITS TO BE DEPOSITED DIRECTLY

Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Ayush

Balaknama reporter visited various kachchi bastis in Jaipur to understand children's problems and achievements. During this visit, an initiative to open bank accounts for children came to light. 14-year-old Ayush (name changed) shared that one day, children from the Mangyawas centre went to Bank of Baroda with their teacher and requested the manager to help the children. Many children, due to financial and family circumstances, cannot visit the bank themselves. They requested that if the bank



cooperates, more accounts could be opened. Taking this request seriously, Bank of Baroda management organised a special camp at the Chetna organisation's education centre. Accounts were opened even for those children who were unable to visit the bank. With these

Talkative Reporter: Parvez
Reporter: Kishan

Everyone knows that playing games is good for health, but it's equally important to understand what kind of games children play, in what environment, and how these activities affect their behavior and future. During a visit by reporters, a 13-year-old boy named Rahul (name changed), living in a slum, shared his real-life story. He said that most families in his slum live simple lives, but the surrounding environment is quite negative, causing many children to easily fall into bad habits and wrong company. Rahul admitted that about two months ago, he too was heading down the same path. From morning till evening, he played games like marbles, spinning tops, and money games using



matchbox coins. Sometimes he felt happy after winning, and at other times upset after losing, but all his time went into these games. The addiction to playing grew so much that he almost stopped going to school and lost all interest in studying. One of his friends kept trying to convince him to visit the Education Club run by the Chetna Organization, but Rahul always refused. One day, his friend took him there by force. Rahul attended for a few days, but soon left again due to his old habits. Later, an Education Club worker visited his home, talked to him at length, explained the difference between right and wrong, the importance of the future, and what education truly means. Gradually, Rahul began attending the club regularly. Within a few weeks, changes could be seen in his behavior, language, thinking, and daily routine. With Chetna's support, he was also enrolled back into school. Today, Rahul proudly says that he studies in Class 6, goes to school daily, and has completely quit money-based games. Rahul believes that he can now see his future moving in the right direction — a change made possible because of his friend, the Education Club, and the Chetna Organization.

AMID THE FAIR'S CROWD, WORKING CHILDREN CELEBRATE WITH HOPE IN THEIR EYES

Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Sonia

For the street and working children of Jaisinghpura, Jaipur, Fridays feel no less than a festival. According to them, this day brings a special opportunity for earning livelihood for themselves and their families. They say that on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, the crowds at temples and mosques increase, which also raises their chances to earn more. A girl named Sonia and a boy named Kumar (names changed, aged 14 and 13 respectively) shared that it doesn't matter to them whether the place where they sell toys or beg is a Hindu temple or a Muslim mosque — what matters most is that their families earn a better



income. Sonia said, "When a festival continues for three days, our happiness and hopes also multiply fourfold, because there are bigger crowds and better earnings." The same happened last Friday, which was the occasion of Barah Wafat. The children knew in advance that there would be large gatherings and fairs near Karbala and other mosques, so their families asked them to come along to sell toys and help in earning through begging. Despite heavy rain and waterlogging on Barah Wafat, the children went out

with hope. The next day, Sonia smiled and said, "I earned ₹2,000 yesterday. Because of the rain, the fair couldn't set up properly — otherwise, I would have earned even more." She added that many people participating in the procession happily gave her ₹50 to ₹100. There was a huge crowd, and though she feared getting separated from her family, there were many other children and families like hers around. Kumar added that children from both rich and poor families came that day: "They bought toys, which helped increase our sales." Finally, Sonia shared that she gave part of her earnings to her family, kept some for her personal needs, and now that she has a bank account, she plans to deposit some money there too.

OUT OF NEED OR CARELESSNESS? KIDS ALTER AADHAAR AGE FOR JOBS

Talkative Reporter: Chandni &
Reporter: Kishan

As days pass, children are growing older, but what they are doing with their lives is a concern. Balaknama reporter spoke to children living near Sector-5, Noida, to understand this. During the discussion, 15-year-old girl Ruhi (name changed), a member of "Badhte Kadam," shared that in their settlement it is common for children to grow older but leave studies to enter the world of work. Many children look over 18 years old, while their actual age is only 14, 15, or 16. Ruhi explained that near their area is a factory zone where most children go to work. You might wonder how children under 18 are working in factories. According to the children,



factories check Aadhaar cards at the time of recruitment, and out of compulsion, children join work. Several supervisors themselves advise children to increase their age on Aadhaar cards so they can get jobs without difficulty. As a result, many children are increasing their age to work in factories. Children whose age appears younger and who cannot alter their Aadhaar work in nearby small shops — such

as clothing shops, grocery stores, or other small market businesses. Shopkeepers do not care much about the child's age; as long as the work is done well, they hire them without hesitation. The children also shared that those who cannot find work start small businesses themselves, like running a small cart, stall, or other micro-business. This report clearly shows how children are moving toward work due to compulsion, necessity, and circumstances. When reporters spoke to parents, they said that while children are enrolled in school, many refuse to attend and waste time at home or outside. Concerned about bad company, parents are often compelled to say, "If you don't want to study, then at least work."

NIGHTTIME SCAVENGING, DAYTIME FATIGUE: CHILDREN WORKING OUT OF NECESSITY

Talkative Reporter: Sahil &
Reporter: Kishan

Whenever reporters have visited street and slum settlements to discuss children's problems, most children have shared that they are busy working from morning till evening. But the question remains: why do some children work through the night, and do they feel safe while working on the streets? Reporters spoke to children living near Sector-15, Noida. A 15-year-old boy shared, "We live in a slum with our parents, and the entire family earns a living by collecting scrap. Right now, continuous rain is making life difficult for everyone. Because of the rain, we cannot

go out to work properly. Often, when we plan to go, heavy rain starts, and we have to stop. But if we don't go to work, the stove at home can't be lit, so we are forced to go out every day." He further explained, "Until a few months ago, we used to go out early in the morning to collect scrap, but heavy rain and intense sunlight made it very difficult. Now, most people and children in our settlement go out at night. We form groups of 15-20 people and search for scrap in markets, lanes, and neighborhoods. We leave around 6 PM and return home by about 3 AM. We collect various scrap materials including cardboard, plastic, and iron." Describing the challenges of working at night,

he said, "The biggest problem is the police. Officers stop us, ask all kinds of questions, and dump our filled bags on the ground as if we are stealing. We explain that we collect scrap, but they often do not trust us and treat us as thieves. Sometimes we are forced to open all our belongings to prove ourselves." The boy also mentioned that the police are not the only concern; people who drink or cause mischief at night also trouble them. "Many times such people snatch scrap from us, demand money, and if we are alone, we have to give it. If we are in a group, we feel slightly safer, but sometimes they even beat us. Despite these difficulties, we have to go out to earn daily."

CHILDREN HONORED FOR DISCIPLINE AND REGULAR ATTENDANCE

Reporter: Ritika
Talkative Reporter: Khushi

Street and working children living in the Chakkarpur area of Gurugram were presented with a special honor by their school, creating an atmosphere of excitement throughout the community. On August 28, children who had maintained discipline and attended school regularly throughout the year were awarded attractive T-shirts. When Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the settlement, the children's faces reflected joy and pride. Khushi, a seventh-grade student, smiled and shared that she received a T-shirt from the school, given to children who arrive on time every day and maintain discipline in the classroom. Khushi studies at the Chetna NGO center, where children are taught regular studies, discipline, punctuality, and the importance of serious learning. Along with Khushi, her classmates Preeti, Jeet, and Jagannath were also honored. Khushi explained that Preeti



excels in science, which is why she received a T-shirt as well. The selection was based on attendance and discipline, recognizing students who performed exceptionally in these areas. Receiving this honor boosted the children's morale. Reporter Ritika congratulated the children, encouraging them to continue attending school regularly, stay disciplined, focus on their studies, and strengthen their future, emphasizing that regularity and discipline are key to life.



SUMI SHINES IN DRAWING COMPETITION, RECEIVES SCHOOL AWARD

Reporter: Ritika
Talkative Reporter: Sumi

On the occasion of Teacher's Day, a drawing competition was organized at a school in Chakkarpur, Gurugram. Many children from the basti participated enthusiastically, showcasing their artistic talents. Among them, a girl named Sumi won first place with her outstanding drawing. Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the Chakkarpur basti, where children happily shared their experiences. During the conversation, Sumi said with a smile, "Dididi, I received a gift from my school. Our teacher had entered my name in the drawing competition. When the results came, I was

first. After that, the school gave me a gift, which included pencils, a cutter, a notebook, and many other items." Sumi further explained that not only she, but all children who secured first, second, and third places were also given gifts, which boosted everyone's enthusiasm. Reporter Ritika encouraged Sumi, saying that she should continue to focus on her studies and further improve her drawing skills. She said, "You are doing very well, and keep working hard like this in the future." Competitions like these build children's confidence and demonstrate that when given the right opportunities, children can win hearts with their hard work and talent.

**CHILDREN'S HELP
LINE NUMBERS**

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

Child line Number

1098

Police Helpline Number

100

GIRLS PLANT A TREE WITH MOTHERS IN THEIR FIRST SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Balaknama Reporter: Damini,
Talkative Reporter: Kanita

During a parent-teacher meeting at school, the Education Department launched the “One Tree in Mother’s Name 2.0” campaign. Under this initiative, children planted saplings in the school courtyard alongside their mothers. Balaknama reporter Damini spoke to the children about their experiences. Kanita (11 years old) from Khar Ki Dhani School in Jaipur expressed her joy, saying that it was the first time she had participated in a school activity with her mother. She shared that enrolling in school had not been easy for her; due to



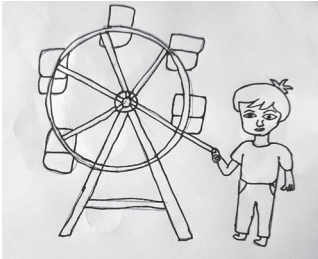
family circumstances and the distance to the school, her parents were initially reluctant to send her. But on this day, her mother accompanied her, interacted with the teachers, and together they planted a tree. Kanita said this was a very special experience for her, as it was her first time being part of a school activity. Similarly, Shubhvanti (12 years old) said

that her mother was also with her. She realized that she truly felt like a part of the school. Both girls shared that they had been afraid to attend school before, but participating in this activity made them feel happy and included. Kanita and Shubhvanti explained that just as a mother nurtures and raises a child, trees provide us with life-giving air, shade, and fruits. The active participation of parents made this campaign even more special. Children were also awarded certificates as a symbol of their involvement. The main purpose of the program was to honor mothers while promoting environmental protection.

EARNINGS FROM FAIR RIDE HELP PRITAM FUND STUDIES AND FAMILY NEEDS

Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Pritam

During festivals in Jaipur, fairs are organized outside temples, with various rides and attractions. For 15-year-old Pritam (name changed), living in the Jaisinghpura Khor slum, these fairs were filled with hope and joy. Pritam is a class 10 student who attends school daily. He shared that near the temple, their old manual swing (charkhi wala jhula), which had been out of use for a long time, was repaired by him and set up again to give children rides. During Ganesh



Chaturthi and Teja Dashami, the temple was crowded, and children took turns on the swing. Pritam explained, “I charged ₹20 per child during the Ganesh Chaturthi fair and earned around ₹4,000 in a single day. During the Teja Dashami fair, I charged ₹50 per

child and earned about ₹12,000 that day. So, the total earnings from both fairs were ₹16,000.” He used some of this money to buy clothes for himself and also contributed a portion to his family. Pritam ensures the swing is securely locked on the path when not in use. On regular days, few children use it, but during festivals, it attracts large crowds. Despite managing the ride, Pritam prioritizes his studies. He said, “I plan to spend this year’s earnings on tuition for my 10th board exams, so I can score good marks and pass successfully.”

HARD WORK PAYS OFF: ALI FROM GURUGRAM SLUM SECURES THIRD PLACE AT SCHOOL

Reporter: Raj Kishore
Talkative Reporter: Ali

For street and working children, accessing education is not easy, but with dedication and effort, they are making their mark. Ali Khan from the Padla Dhani Basti in Gurugram is a shining example. Recently, Ali secured third place in his school and received a prize for his achievement. Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore visited the Padla Dhani Contact Point and found children proudly sharing that Ali’s hard work had borne fruit. Originally from Bihar, Ali lives in the Gurugram basti with his parents and siblings.

He recounted, “Brother, the journey here was not easy. Paying rent was difficult, my parents did not get regular work, and even covering school expenses was impossible.” Due to financial difficulties, Ali had drifted away from his studies and often wandered around the basti. During this time, he met the workers of the Chetna Foundation, who explained to him and his parents the importance of education and encouraged him to attend the center. Initially hesitant, Ali soon joined regularly after seeing many children studying there. The foundation not only provided a

learning environment but also supplied notebooks, books, and recreational materials. Later, Ali was enrolled in a government school and began studying diligently. Through consistent effort and practice, he achieved third place in his exams. After receiving the award, he said, “I am very happy that I worked hard and got results. My dream now is to achieve even higher marks and support my family.” Ali’s success demonstrates that when children are given opportunities, guidance, and encouragement, they can achieve just as much as anyone else.

BEARING THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY TO THE BEAT OF THE DHOLAK

Balaknama Reporter: Deepak
Talkative Reporter: Viren

Balaknama reporter Deepak visited several slums in Jaipur and came across an interesting story. Viren (name changed), a 10-year-old boy living in the Mangyawas slum in Jaipur, is a class 5 student. Alongside his studies, he also plays the dholak (a traditional drum) at various events. Through this skill, he earns around ₹1,000 to ₹1,500 each month. Viren shared that after school or during festival holidays, he goes with his mother and aunt to play the dholak at different events such as Teej, other festivals, weddings, and cultural programs. Some time ago, Viren opened a bank account and now deposits his earnings regularly. He carefully manages this money—sometimes buying new clothes for himself, at other times purchasing notebooks, drawing books, or small gifts for his younger



siblings. He even contributes to family celebrations like birthdays and festivals. When asked about his future plans for the money, Viren gave an innocent yet thoughtful answer: he will save it and use it to help his family when needed. While many children spend their time only playing, Viren shows that hard work, responsibility, and the habit of saving do not depend on age.

INNOCENT LIVES STRUGGLE WITHOUT ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

Balaknama Reporter: Ritika
Talkative Reporter: Rahul

When Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the JMD slum in Sector-62, Gurugram, the children’s faces showed innocent smiles, but their struggles were also clearly visible. During the conversation, 14-year-old Rahul came forward and said, “The water we get here has dirt in it. We can’t drink it, cook with it, bathe, or even wash our clothes with it.” Ritika asked if they had informed the slum owners about this problem. Rahul replied sadly, “We have told them, but they don’t listen. They say that if it’s a problem, we should leave the slum. They won’t do anything.” Hearing this, Ritika wondered what options the children and their families even have. When asked if this happens every day, Rahul said, “Yes, from morning till evening, the water has dirt in it. Everyone is troubled, but what else can we do? We don’t have money for another home.” The other children nodded in agreement. One said that their mother filters the water every day, but dirt still remains, and another



child added that sometimes it even causes stomach pain. Ritika remarked that this problem is not just about dirty water—it reflects poverty, neglect, and inequality, where children may smile, but the hardships of their lives do not settle down like the dirt in their water. This report highlights that access to clean water and better living conditions is every child’s right. Until basic facilities reach these slums, these children will be forced to live with their struggles, smiling through the hardship.

INJURED WHILE PICKING SCRAP, CHILD RECEIVES HELP FROM HUMANITY

Talkative Reporter: Shahbaz
Reporter: Kishan

Children working on the streets often face extremely difficult circumstances. During a visit to Noida, the reporter met a 14-year-old boy, Tony (name changed). During the conversation, the reporter noticed that the boy’s leg was

badly injured and flies were sitting on it. Concerned, the reporter asked how it happened. The boy explained, “We live in a slum near Noida Sector 15 with our parents. Our entire work is collecting and sorting scrap. One day, we went to the market area to collect scrap. When our bag was full, we keep it in a safe place and come back for

it later. That day, when our bag was full, we were transferring it into another bag. Suddenly, a stray dog that was roaming around bit my leg. I started crying and shouting loudly, but the dog wouldn’t let go. It tore a lot of flesh from my leg, and the situation was very bad.” He continued, “Then a kind elder sister saw us. She immediately

chased the dog away with sticks and stones and came forward to help us. She took us to a nearby doctor for treatment. She paid for the medicine, injections, and the doctor’s fees. Later, she even brought us fruits and took us home. She gave us some money and told us to complete the treatment. We went to the doctor every

day, just as she had said.” With a sparkle in his eyes, the boy said, “That day, that sister came like an angel for us. If she hadn’t come, I don’t know what would have happened. Maybe the dog would have continued biting, and I might not have survived. We collect scrap to feed our family; this is our only support and work.”

PLAYGROUND OVERRUN BY HAZARDS, ENDANGERING CHILDREN



Bureau Report

It is well known that playing and staying physically active is essential for children's health. Playing keeps their bodies healthy and helps them release energy. However, during a visit to a slum in Noida, our team found that a playground meant for children has become a site for superstitious practices, putting children's safety at risk. Children shared that around 150 or more kids

live in their slum. Near the slum is a village and a park, while the next nearest park is 2–3 kilometers away. Due to the distance and parental restrictions, children cannot go there to play. Instead, they use a large open government field next to the slum to play bat-ball and other games. Recently, however, a new problem has arisen. Local residents and passersby, seeing the empty field, leave items such as lemons,

needles, rice, coconuts, laddus (sweet rice balls), pulses, or ashes from religious rituals, believing these objects remove misfortune, ghosts, or other problems from their homes. Children often don't notice these objects while playing, and sometimes they step on them. The biggest danger arises for small children, aged 3–5, who cannot recognize these items and sometimes put them in their mouths. This brings the risks intended for others into their own homes. Some children then exhibit unusual behavior, prompting families to visit tantriks (ritual practitioners) and spend money on charms or remedies, which often prove ineffective. This situation highlights the urgent need for safe, clean, and dedicated playgrounds for children, free from hazards and superstitious practices.



CHILDREN FACE HARDSHIPS DUE TO WATER SCARCITY

Balaknama Reporter: Raj Kishore
Talkative Reporter: Golu

When Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore visited the Palda slum in Gurugram, the children shared their biggest problem: lack of water. The children explained that the slum does not have a submersible pump, which has made the water issue extremely serious. According to them, water is supplied daily through a tanker, but there is no fixed timing. Sometimes it arrives in the morning, other times in the afternoon or evening. About 400 to 500 people live in the entire slum, and everyone depends on the same tanker for bathing, washing utensils, doing laundry, and cooking. The children said

that the tanker water runs out quickly, and often they do not even get enough water to bathe. One child said sadly that when there is no water, they have to go to school without bathing, and other children mock them for smelling bad. When the children raised this issue with their teacher, she only said, "Take a bath every day," but the children explained that even if they want to, they cannot bathe daily because there simply isn't enough water in the slum. This report shows that the struggle of the Palda slum children is not just about education; it is also a daily fight for water. While water is a basic necessity for every human being, for these children it has become a daily worry and struggle.

CHILDREN IN GURUGRAM SLUMS TRANSFORM LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

Reporter: Ritika,
Talkative Reporter: Zubair

In the narrow lanes of the slums, it is heartbreaking to see children of play age collecting scrap. Yet, in these same lanes, education is now shining as a new light, transforming the lives of these children. When Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the area, she observed several young children who spend half their day collecting scrap. One of them is Zubair, who shared his story with innocence and confidence. He said, "We study at the Chetna NGO center until 1 PM. After that, we go out to collect scrap. Seeing other children, I also started collecting scrap. The money we earn helps cover our household expenses."



Zubair collects scrap with his friends Ajay and Arjun (both from Bihar). These children use their earnings to buy household necessities and support their families. Earlier, Zubair and his friends

were distant from education, but after joining the Chetna center, positive changes began in their lives. Now they are learning counting, reading, and writing in Hindi at the center, and also participating in games. Ritika noted that Zubair has become more conscious about cleanliness and enthusiastic about studying. With a smile, he said, "Now I come to the center every day because I want to grow up and do good work through education." The story of these children proves that even in difficult circumstances, education and hope can bring meaningful change. Today, these children are not only fulfilling their family responsibilities but are also prioritizing their studies for a brighter future.



POST-RAIN TROUBLES RISE, CHILDREN IN CHAKKARPUR SLUM SUFFER FROM FEVER

Balaknama Reporter: Ritika
Talkative Reporter: Jyoti

After the monsoon season, conditions in Gurugram's Chakkarpur slum have become extremely concerning. Stagnant dirty water, mud, and heaps of garbage have seriously affected the health of children. Many children are currently suffering from diseases like typhoid and chikungunya. When Balaknama reporter Ritika visited the slum, the children's suffering was clearly evident in their conversations. Jyoti, a girl from the slum, said that many children there have contracted typhoid, leaving them bedridden for several days and unable to attend school. High fever, body pain, loss of appetite, and weakness prevent the children from studying or playing, causing many to remain absent from school for weeks, making their childhood seem paused. The situation is not limited to the children alone; families are also facing increased difficulties. Most parents in the slum work as daily wage laborers, but because their children are ill, they are forced to stay home

repeatedly, impacting their earnings and making medicines and treatment an added financial burden. Local residents explained that after the rains, the entire slum fills with water, and there is no proper drainage system. This leads to the growth of mosquitoes in the dirt and mud, rapidly spreading diseases like chikungunya. Moreover, the lack of clean drinking water and nutritious food is causing children to fall victim to typhoid. People emphasized that without prompt sanitation measures and proper drainage, the risk of diseases could increase further. Experts highlight that timely cleaning, mosquito control, availability of medicines, and regular health check-ups for children are crucial. The situation in Chakkarpur slum reminds us that hygiene and health awareness are not just conveniences—they are essential responsibilities linked to safeguarding children's futures. Without clean surroundings and accessible healthcare, children are forced to spend their childhood amidst illness and hardship.

SLUM KIDS STAY SAFE AMID INCREASING FIRECRACKER HAZARDS

Balaknama Reporter: Raj Kishore
Talkative Reporter: Raki Aslam

As Diwali lights up markets and shops with firecrackers, their sparkle is becoming a danger for some children. When Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore visited the Palda slum in Gurugram, the children shared a painful incident related to Diwali. According to the children, their friend Ahmed, 12 years old, was seriously injured while lighting a firecracker. The children said that on that day they were all lighting firecrackers together. Ahmed tried to ignite a bomb, but it didn't explode immediately. When he went



to check it, the bomb suddenly went off, causing a deep injury to his hand. The children stated that this was not an isolated

incident. Many children had been injured while lighting firecrackers before—some suffered burns, some had their clothes catch fire, and several times, nearby areas faced the risk of fire. Witnessing all this, the children in the slum have now decided to avoid dangerous firecrackers and celebrate Diwali safely. One 11-year-old said that they will no longer light firecrackers but will celebrate the festival with lamps and lights to ensure no one gets hurt. This incident reminds us that while celebrating festivals, safety is as important as joy, because a small mistake can lead to a major accident.

HEAVY RAINS FLOOD HOMES, SNAKES SCARE KIDS, SLUM LIFE BECOMES TOUGHER



Talkative Reporter & Reporter Kishan

Living in slums is never easy. Children working and living on the streets face these hardships due to their circumstances. During heavy rains in the slums near Noida Sector 76, journalists observed that children were visibly worried, and several showed signs of stress and

poor health. A 14-year-old girl, Ruby (name changed), shared that whenever it rains heavily, water floods the homes. The water causes snakes, insects, and other creatures to emerge from the ground and enter homes. "Even in our house, several snakes come out daily. Out of fear, our family cannot cook properly or sleep comfortably, as snakes

sometimes appear near the bed or stove. Sometimes we don't even notice them, and when we do, our hearts start racing with fear," she said. Another 12-year-old girl, Simran (name changed), mentioned that snakes have entered her home as well. Her parents sometimes catch the snakes, but when they cannot, they are forced to kill them to prevent potential bites. Occasionally, they even burn the snakes after killing them. The fear and stress have caused the family to fall ill over the past three days. After listening to the children, journalists explained that harming animals, big or small, is wrong. If a snake enters a home, creating smoke can safely drive it away without harming anyone. Abdul (11, name changed) shared that his father catches snakes and releases them far from the house instead of killing them.



CONTAMINATED POND POSES HEALTH RISK TO CHILDREN

Reporter: Raj Kishore
Talkative Reporter: Adhuri

When Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore visited the Ghata settlement in Gurugram, the children shared a serious concern. They said that the pond (hodi) near their settlement has become so polluted that bathing in it causes itching and other health problems. The children explained that many people dump rice, dishwashing water, and various kinds of garbage into the pond. Moreover, people wash utensils in the same water, mixing soap foam and dirt directly into the pond, rendering the water highly contaminated. When the children try to advise neighbors not to pollute the pond, they face

scolding and shouting in return. As the situation worsened, the children complained to the settlement contractor, requesting regular cleaning of the pond and strict measures to prevent pollution, so that the children and the community do not fall ill. Reporter Raj Kishore also observed on-site that people were bathing and washing utensils in the pond, with dirty water flowing back into it. Shampoo and soap foam were visibly floating on the surface. Local residents and children warned that if cleaning and preventive measures are not taken promptly, health problems will increase. They appealed to the community not to pollute the pond and urged authorities to address this issue immediately.

'NANNHE PARINDE' VAN BRINGS POSITIVE CHANGE AMONG SETTLEMENT CHILDREN

Talkative Reporter: Soni & Reporter: Kishan

Education is our greatest support and a powerful tool to move forward in life. Without using this tool, one often lags behind. Even today, in every state of India, there are millions of children who are deprived of education and either do not want to go to school or cannot attend. Is this fair? To explore this question, a reporter visited a settlement in Noida. Upon arrival, the reporter noticed some innocent small children and adolescents aged 14-15. Through conversations, the aim was to understand whether all children in the settlement attend school.

One by one, the children shared their experiences. The settlement has approximately 200 families living in rented shanties, most of whom work in scrap collection or related jobs. There are around 300 children aged 7 to 17 years. Surprisingly, only about 10 children have parents who are aware of the importance of education and attend school regularly. Around 40 children have Aadhaar cards, but many face issues such as incorrect spellings of their names, inflated ages, or incorrect address details. These issues prevent them from enrolling in school. 14-year-old girl Neha (name changed) shared that some parents are trying to



fix these problems, but many families cannot afford it. They feel that if children do not go to school anyway, what is the point of correcting Aadhaar cards? Therefore, they often ignore it. Many parents leave for work in the morning and

return late in the evening. Due to lack of attention, tasks related to Aadhaar card corrections remain incomplete. Children spend the day on household chores, wandering outside, or playing aimlessly. The positive news is that the "Nannhe

Parinde" van has now started visiting this settlement regularly. Children have begun coming to the van for learning, and Chetna Organisation workers have completed the school admission process for over 20 children. Work to correct Aadhaar cards for the remaining children is ongoing, and they are being called daily to the van for education. The children said, "Ever since the van started coming, we are very happy. Now most of us are connected with studies daily and can feel the change." Slowly, positive transformation is visible in the settlement, and children are beginning to understand the importance of education.

STREET AND WORKING CHILDREN SET AN EXAMPLE IN SAFETY AWARENESS

Balaknama Reporter: Damini

When Balaknama reporters visited the slum areas of Jaipur, they found that street and working children are not only aware of their own safety but are also playing a vital role in ensuring the safety of other children. Recently, two such incidents came to light that highlight the awareness, sensitivity, and courage of these children. In a slum located on Agra Road, a girl named Poonam (name changed) rescued a 12-year-old boy from the cruelty of his parents. The boy's mother used to beat him severely and even tried to give him an electric shock. Showing presence of mind, Poonam immediately called the 1098 Child Helpline

and provided complete details. Timely intervention helped rescue the child from violence and ensure his safety. Similarly, Aashi (name changed) from Jaisinghpura Khor raised her voice for a 14-year-old boy who had been falsely accused of theft. Without investigation, the police had taken him to the station. Aashi bravely called the Child Helpline and informed them that the child was being falsely implicated due to family enmity. Upon receiving the information, the Childline team coordinated with the police and secured the boy's release. These two incidents prove that when children are aware of their rights and procedures, they can protect not only themselves but also others.

CHILDREN SELLING FLOWERS BENEATH THE METRO STATION

Balaknama Reporter: Raj Kishore
Talkative Reporter: Sumit

When Balaknama reporter Raj Kishore went out for reporting in Gurugram, he was struck by the scene under the MG Road Metro Station near Sahara Mall. There, a girl of about 12-13 years was selling rose flowers. The reporter tried to talk to her, and the girl smiled and said, "Brother, take a flower, it will be nice to keep at home or to give as a gift." The reporter smiled and asked, "I will surely take a flower, but tell me, why are you doing this work at such a young age? Does anyone force you to do it?" The girl calmly replied, "No, no one forces me. I do

this work of my own will." She explained that her family is not well-off, and sometimes there is not enough food, so she and her siblings do small jobs to help manage household expenses. Her parents also work as laborers. During the conversation, the girl also mentioned that her family lives in a nearby slum and they do not have a permanent house. Her brothers work in different places—some at red light signals, some under the metro station, and some do cleaning work. Listening to her, it was clear that this is not just the story of one child, but the reality of hundreds of innocent children carrying responsibilities beyond their



age. Sometimes people buy flowers from them, and other times they give a little money without buying anything. Yet, these young lives continue their daily struggle under the shadow of the metro, amidst the hustle and bustle of the city.

SHOCKED FAMILY RAISES SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT ANGANWADI SAFETY

Bureau Report

Sometimes a small act of negligence can have grave consequences. In our homes, neighbourhoods, and surroundings, there are young children who attend nursery or anganwadi. The purpose of an anganwadi is to provide children with a safe environment, education, nutrition, and learning opportunities. However, the pain of a 15-year-old girl from a village in Noida has raised serious questions about that system. She shared that her younger sister, just four years old, used to go to anganwadi happily every day. The family always trusted that children were safe there and that the workers kept a close watch. But one day, a moment of carelessness shattered that trust

completely. The girl explained that the anganwadi has three exits, and the biggest problem is that none of these exits have gates or proper security arrangements. Children can go in and out at any time. She has often seen small children wandering outside while the workers do not pay any attention. There is no counting of children, no supervision. Parents send their children to anganwadi with trust, but no one is fulfilling the responsibility of safety. On the day of the incident, her sister went to anganwadi as usual, but the workers left the children unattended and got busy with their panchayat work. No one was concerned with the care or safety of the children. During this time, a drunken man, not fully aware of his actions, entered the anganwadi through



an open path. With no gate or guard, he went straight inside, took the four-year-old girl to the toilet, and committed obscene acts with her. All of this happened while the workers were unaware of the children's whereabouts. After some time, a five-year-old child gathered courage and informed a worker that a stranger had taken a girl

to the toilet. Only then did chaos ensue. The worker ran towards the toilet, but the door was locked from inside. After several attempts, the door was opened, and the accused was caught. Villagers beat the drunk man before handing him over to the police.

When the family learned of the incident, they rushed to the anganwadi. Seeing the condition of the four-year-old, the family broke down in tears. The child was immediately taken to the hospital for treatment. The elder sister told the media that this incident was solely due to the negligence of the anganwadi staff. If the children had been supervised, if security gates had been installed, or even a single guard posted, a drunken stranger could never have entered, and her sister would

not have been assaulted. She warned that while her sister is in the hospital today, tomorrow another child could face the same danger. Appealing for action, the girl said: "We send children to anganwadi so that they can learn, play, and be safe. But if there are no doors and no supervision, how will the children remain safe? I want gates installed at all three entrances and guards posted, so that no stranger can enter and children cannot leave unsupervised." This incident is a serious lesson for villagers, families, and local authorities: child safety is not a formality; it is the greatest responsibility. A small lapse endangered the life of an innocent child. The pressing question now is whether the system will change after this incident, or will such events continue to recur.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND LEADERSHIP IN A FIVE-DAY RESIDENTIAL WORKSHOP

from page no. 1

rounds, plays, songs, dances, street talks, and "Workshop in My Words" reflections. During Street Talk, children expressed how challenging the lives of street and working children are. The event was graced by distinguished guests — Mr. Ashok Bairwa, Assistant Professor, Rajasthan State Council of Educational Research and Training (RSCERT), and Mrs. Seema Sharma, a counselor and entrepreneur. At the Gurugram children's session, Mr. Lohit Ameta, Assistant Director, Department of Child Rights, Jaipur, was present as the chief guest. He shared that this workshop not only teaches children but also inspires them to recognize their rights and move forward with confidence.

At the end of the workshop, children shared their experiences:

- A 14-year-old girl from Delhi said that through Chetna, she got the chance to attend school and now studies in Class 7.
- A 15-year-old boy from Delhi shared that he learned about child rights in detail for the first time.
- Niharika (name changed), 13, from Gurugram said she now understands that leaders aren't just in schools but also in homes and communities.
- Sonu (name changed), 13, from Jaipur said he used to make sounds on the water tank at home and realized

here that even that is a form of music — that music exists everywhere around us.

- Deepu (name changed), 12, said she was initially nervous about attending but later gained confidence and learned to speak on stage.
- Lalita (name changed), 12, said that unlike in her slum, here she got a chance to learn about physical and mental growth, games, and time management.

- A 14-year-old boy said he earlier knew only the police helpline, but now he's aware of many support services and how they help children.
- A 12-year-old girl shared that the final cultural program was one of the most joyful experiences of her life.

In truth, this workshop was not just a five-day experience — it became a turning point in many children's lives. They learned leadership, teamwork, confidence, rights awareness, and problem-solving skills. These children will now take their learnings back to their communities — encouraging others to attend school, participate in activities, recognize their rights, and face difficulties with courage. This workshop not only transformed the participating children but will also create ripples of change across many more communities — truly living up to its purpose that when one child learns, the entire community transforms.

HOW EDUCATION SHATTERED THE BARRIERS OF CASTE

Balaknama Reporter: Damini
Talkative Reporter: Riya

The children of Jaisinghpura Khor slum in Jaipur have proven that education is not limited to books — it has the power to transform both thinking and society. Thirteen-year-old Riya (name changed) says, "Education has not only taught us how to read and write, but also how to differentiate between right and wrong. Now we understand that discriminating on the basis of caste or religion is wrong." Riya and her 13-year-old friend Ankita (name changed) live in the same slum but had not spoken to each other for seven years because they belonged to different castes and communities. Ankita shared,



"At home, we were taught to talk only to children from our own caste, so we kept our distance. But once we started going to school and the center, we began studying, playing, and even eating together." Twelve-year-old Arpita (name changed) proudly says, "Earlier, during festivals, separate tents were set up based on caste, but this Navratri, all the children came together to play Garba and Dandiya. Children from the Singwal community joined the

Gond tribal families, and they taught us Garba." The change is not limited to the children — it's now visible among their families too. Parents no longer stop their children from mingling with others. The children say that working and playing together without discrimination doubles their happiness and makes the slum's atmosphere more beautiful. Twelve-year-old Rohit (name changed) adds, "When we forget the differences of caste and religion and live together, festivals and games become even more fun." The children have shown that education is the key that not only breaks the chains of superstition but also fills society with unity, respect, and love.

A RAY OF LIGHT IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

Balaknama Reporter: Nitin

Mehran (name changed), a 13-year-old boy living in Nehru Camp, Delhi, is a student at one of Chetna's learning centers. During a family dispute in his village, a sickle accidentally struck his eye, causing him to lose vision in one eye. Due to a lack of money, his family could not afford timely treatment, and the infection from one eye spread to the other, eventually leaving Mehran completely blind. He became fully dependent on his friends and family. Despite his condition, he continued to visit the center every day, and with Chetna's



efforts, he was even re-enrolled in school. However, since his parents were daily wage workers, he could not go to school alone, and his name was eventually removed from the register. But his friends never gave up on him. They kept convincing his parents to seek treatment, and one day their efforts finally paid off. The children collected money among themselves and

handed it to Mehran's mother so that she could take him to AIIMS hospital. After the doctors examined him, they performed surgery on one of his eyes. Thankfully, Mehran regained full vision in that eye. After regaining his eyesight, the first thing Mehran did was meet his friends and the Chetna team to thank them. Today, he happily roams around with his friends again and attends the center regularly to study. Thanks to his friends' compassion and determination, light has returned to Mehran's once-dark world — and he remains deeply grateful to his friends and Chetna for this new beginning.

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.

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