

# BLUE UMBRELLA

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### AN INITIATIVE TOWARDS THE PROTECTION OF STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN IN DELHI

Thousands of children connected with the streets live bereft of their basic rights of survival, protection, development and participation. They may be seen begging at traffic signals, selling items in busy markets, working as child labours and picking rags. Five hundred such children living and working in difficult street situations such as under flyovers, at traffic signals, at railway platforms, in market areas and in low income communities were identified in three districts of Delhi after an extensive survey. Having interacted with hundreds of children, people living on the streets, passers-by and high level



authorities, CHETNA joined hands with the Consortium for Street Children and emerged with Blue Umbrella- an initiative to ensure children's right to

protection while living on the streets. Blue Umbrella functions in the following areas:

- Moolchand flyover
- IIT Gate flyover

- Kotla flyover
- Lajpat Nagar market
- Sarojini Nagar market
- Sansi Camp
- Nizamudin Khatta
- Behlolpur Khadar
- Old Delhi Railway Station

The initiative was launched by Ms. Esha Pandey- Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Police Unit for Women and Children on 9th October 2017 at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road. During her conversation with street connected children from various parts of Delhi, Ms. Pandey acknowledged the difficult circumstances that these children live in, and officially inaugurated Blue Umbrella.

#### EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

We are proud to share that the project Blue Umbrella has been successfully launched with support from Consortium for Street Children. We present to you this first biannual edition announcing the progress of the initiative, and seek your support towards the protection of street connected children.

#### Editorial team

Sanjay Gupta,  
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and Jyoti

#### BUDDING REPORTERS OF BALAKNAMA TRAINED FOR PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

*Balaknama is a fully functional newspaper brought out independently by and for street connected children in North India. CHETNA is the mentor of the newspaper.*

A full-day training was organized for twelve reporters of Balaknama on 12th December 2017 at Indian Women Press Corps (IWPC). The training was conducted by eminent journalists Preeti Mehra from Business Line, Norris Pritam- a renowned sports journalist, Divya Trivedi

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## DELHI POLICE SENSITIZED ON CHILD-RELATED LAWS

Police officials of Defence Colony, Hauz Khas, Sarojini Nagar and Badarpur police station were sensitized on child rights through trainings on laws related to children such as Juvenile Justice (JJ) Care and Protection Act 2015 and POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act 2012. The trainings, conducted by Mr. Bhupendra Shandilya- the advocacy coordinator of CHETNA, observed participation of over sixty police officials from these police stations. The interactive sessions began with the basic question- 'who is a child?'

It was made clear that while ages 14 and 16 are appropriate for defining a child under different laws, it is only age 18 that marks the definition of a child as per



international standards. The police was told about the legal status of children who are observed begging. While some officials were familiar with the the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, it was clarified that under the new provisions

of the JJ Act, such children fall under the ambit of 'children in need of care and protection' and must not be treated as criminals. "While police trainings are often held for Juvenile Welfare Officers (JWOs)/Child Welfare Protection Officers

(CWPOs), it is essential that other police staff be also sensitized on dealing with child-related issues. This was a very captivating and fruitful training for all of us", said Mr. Rituraj, SHO of Sarojini Nagar Police Station.

# DELHI POLICE TRAINS STREET CONNECTED GIRLS FOR SELF-DEFENCE

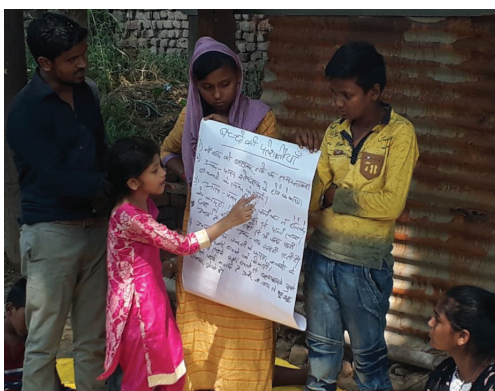


On 9th October 2017, 46 street and working children from different street locations of Delhi gathered at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road to share their day-to-day concerns of living on the streets with DCP (Special Police Unit for Women and Children) Esha Pandey. Amongst various other issues, street girls shared narratives of eve teasing and molestation on the streets. "When I go to school, men look at me and pass lecherous looks and comments", said a twelve year old girl from a street location in South Delhi. Similarly, another girl living under a flyover said "when we beg at the traffic signal, sometimes men try to pull us inside their cars". Gathering from the stories that street girls need to be empowered to tackle the issue of eve teasing and molestation, DCP Esha Pandey extended support on behalf of Delhi Police to organize self defence workshops for these girls. The 10 day workshop was inaugurated on 14th November, marking Children's Day. It was started at five locations- Nizamudin Khatta, Sansi Camp, Kotla flyover, Chunabhatti and IIT Gate Flyover. Each girl participating in the workshop was handed a white cap as a symbol of taking ownership of her empowerment. All girls were regularly counselled regarding the importance of the workshop, and ways to avoid abuse. It was observed that these workshop



gathered significant attention from the communities and passers-by, and various other girls from nearby areas joined the workshop. Local stakeholders negotiated for spaces to accommodate the increasing numbers of girls. Street girls were mobilized

to spare some time which they otherwise spend working for their livelihood, or taking care of the household and younger siblings. At locations where street girls attend schools, the timings were modified to accommodate both. Soon, girls were practising defence against one another as mock moves. On the last day, local police officials congratulated the girls and distributed certificates to all girls who had completed the ten day course. The girls shared their learnings with the officials, and the officials encouraged the girls to use these techniques and seek their help whenever needed. At each location, group meetings were conducted by leaders of Badhte Kadam on the last day to plan the way forward after the ten day workshop. "It is not that I can fight anyone who tries to attack me, but at least I know how and where to punch. I feel confident. I am no less than a man and I can do much better. And I have a certificate too!" said a seventeen year old street girl having undertaken the training at Nizamudin Khatta. Ms. Pooja, one of the trainers of self defence workshops said "we often organize these workshops in schools, but I realize that it is equally, if not more, important for these girls to take the training. This was a unique experience for us. We wish them a safe and empowered future."



## Street connected children learn how to protect themselves on the streets

Life skills workshops were organized for over five hundred street children in batches of thirty children or less at various street locations in South Delhi. During these interactive sessions, children were taught about their rights, about various helpline numbers available for them such as that of Childline, police and ambulance. These workshops aim at helping children learn how to prevent and react in risky situations, and telling them about the different protection mechanisms made available to them

by the state. Through ice breaking activities, games and activities, the life skills workshops are made child-friendly and participatory in nature. "I have to leave my work (selling balloons) for one hour, but it is a lot of fun. I get to know about so many things. I never knew no one has the right to beat me up. I thought being beaten up is a part of being a child. But now I know no one can touch me!", said a 13 year old boy living under the IIT flyover. Surender Kumar, CHETNA's resource person excelling

in direct engagement with children who conducts these workshops says "it is absolutely essential that children get to know about their rights. After years of experience, I can say that children are attracted to these workshops because gradually they get to know that they are not mere humans living on the streets but are granted a special status by the state and society. Once they get a hang of it, you can see a visible difference their level of confidence and assertion."

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT UN GENERAL COMMENT ON CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS?

### CHETNA SHARES ITS EXPERIENCES IN GENEVA

The Committee on the Rights of the Children adopted General Comment No 21 on Children in Street Situations. To celebrate the launch of the General Comment, the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner held a side event in Geneva, organised with Consortium for Street Children. The event aimed at raising awareness of the General Comment and of its potential to transform the lives of street-connected children. Deliberation was held on how the General Comment should be implemented in different parts of the world. Stakeholders from various countries participated in this discussion and put across their views on different aspects of the lives of street connected children, such as health and protection. Sanjay Gupta, the director of CHETNA and the shared learning lead of Blue Umbrella represented the scenario of street connected children in India, and laid focus on the need of a formulated census of street children and the formal adoption of UN General Comment by the local authorities. The event culminated with a rigorous insight on the context-specific implementation of the General Comment.

# DIRECT CONVERSATION BETWEEN STREET CONNECTED CHILDREN AND DCP, DELHI POLICE

With a rising need to bring street children under the protection cover, Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA) facilitated an interface of over fifty street and working children with Delhi Police on 9th October at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road. Ms. Esha Pandey, DCP, Special Police Unit for Women and Children presided the event and responded to various questions raised by children coming from street situations in different parts of Delhi. Some of the issues raised by children were about eve-teasing and lack of security for girls in street situations, sale of substance around railway stations pushing children into substance abuse, and ill-conduct of kabadiwalas towards children engaged in ragpicking.

## BADHTE KADAM AND BAAKNAMA LEAD THE DISCUSSION

Team leaders of Badhte Kadam and Balaknama narrated the journey of children being passive dwellers of the streets to being empowered individuals with a right to participation. Jyoti, the national secretary of Badhte Kadam (a federation of over ten thousand street and working children in North India formed in 2002)



spoke of the federation as an integral cog of the children's right to participation, through which children raise their concerns amongst themselves and at public forums. Shambhu, the editor of Balaknama walked the audience through the journey of Balaknama (a newspaper brought out by the Badhte Kadam federation) from it being a two page newsletter in 2003, to the existing eight page fully operational newspaper which is distributed across six thousand stakeholders.

## CHILDREN SHARE THEIR STORIES

Next session of the interface was dedicated to sharing experiences and concerns by street connected children with the authority, and a series of questions and answers based on them.



## CHILDREN SHARE THEIR STORIES

- "When I go to school, men look at me and pass lecherous looks and comments", said a twelve year old girl from Valmiki Camp.
- "So many children inhale fluid and other substances around the Old Delhi Railway Station. Why are shopkeepers allowed to sell this material at all if it so harmful for everybody?" asked a seventeen year old from Old Delhi Railway



- Station.
- A twelve year old boy from IIT Gate flyover said "I sleep on the pavement because I don't have any shelter. Passers-by feel free to hit me or misbehave with me for no fault of my own. I feel

hurt and insulted."

- "I understand police has a lot of power. I want this power too. Is it possible for me to become a policeman? What will I have to do for that?" asked a thirteen year curiously.
- "I am a ragpicker. My boss, the kabadiwala (rag collector), often lures me into deals which discourage me from studying. For example, if I ask for permission to go and study, he will give me lesser money for my work", said a seventeen year old Avinash living at Nizamudin Railway Station.
- "In our area, older children influence younger children to consume substance. Infact, parents themselves force children into selling substance abuse. There is a whole chain of procuring, selling and consuming substances. We are stuck!" exclaimed a sixteen year boy living at Nizamudin Railway Station
- "All girls in my community defecate in the open. Men bully us. It is very embarrassing for us", said a ten year girl from Nizamuddin Khatta.
- A twelve old from Valmiki Camp said "all men in my community gamble, drink and abuse us. What should we do?"
- "I work in a godown and my godown owner beats me up a lot. What do I do? I don't have any option; I have

to work there nevertheless" said a ten year old from Barapulla.



In an engaging and interactive discussion, Ms Pandey took utmost interest in questions raised by children. Ms. Pandey expressed the commitment of ensuring women safety in Delhi, and thereby organizing self-defence workshops for street-connected girls. She encouraged all girls to raise their voices in situations of harassment of any kind. She promised to look into the matter of unauthorized sale of substance in the areas mentioned by children, and consult the local police to combat the issue. She suggested that meetings of stakeholders such as kabadiwalas be held with the respective SHOs to tackle the issue of their ill-conduct of towards children.

Acknowledging the support of GRP Nizamudin and CHETNA in providing education to street children by providing space to these children in their own premises, Ms. Pandey felicitated five children who are pursuing education through Open Basic Education, boosting their morale.

Through this enriching engagement with children, Ms. Pandey conveyed to children that their confidence and dedication can take them to heights. She instilled a sense of assurance in children that Delhi police is available and accessible to them in any situation that concerns the violation of their rights.

Ms. Pandey endorsed this initiative by launching a blue umbrella which symbolizes protection. This interface between street children and a police official of this high stature was a unique initiative, opening doors for further action for the empowerment of these children.

# BUDDING REPORTERS OF BALAKNAMA TRAINED FOR PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM

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from Frontline, Shubhomoy Sikdar-journalist with Hindustan Times covering Delhi and the police beat, and Jaya Nigam. The training began with Shambhu walking the panel through the journey of Balaknama and explaining how the team of Balaknama functions to gather stories, verifies them, and conducts meetings to decide the layout and significance of each story. The structure of the team, roles and responsibilities of different team members were described for the panel. The panel acknowledged



and appreciated the meticulousness with which the team functions. In an engaging discussion, the key areas of reporting, editing, layouts, headlines and distribution were discussed. In addition, the

lesser talked about aspects of journalism, particularly the kind that concern the safety of the reporters, were talked about. "Sometimes, we find ourselves not-so-safe reporting one or the other issue. It is not easy to

talk about gruesome realities of the streets. But this is what our battle is. We are trained not only for journalism, we are trained for courage" said Jyoti, a reporter of Balaknama.

The panel suggested that the Balaknama team be provided training on design softwares, which will give them the expertise to design the layout of the paper that they may creatively modify and experiment with. Further, they have suggested that the succeeding workshops focus on use of video to expand the nature and reach of Balaknama.

# STAKEHOLDERS UNITE TO TALK ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AMONGST STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN

A consultation was conducted to discuss the grave concern of child sexual abuse, observing participation of 35 stakeholders including the officials of the District Child Protection Unit and the Child Welfare Committees from various districts of Delhi. The consultation was held at Indian Social

Institute, Lodhi Road. Based on the discussion, a protection action plan was developed consisting the following:

1) Even though mechanisms are in place, reporting is often an issue because victims or families hesitate from reporting or tend to turn hostile during trials. Child sexual abuse has to

be propagated as an issue that needs to be addressed and not swooped under the carpet as a mere 'incident'. This calls for sensitization on the issue of child sexual abuse through community rallies and counseling. It also creates scope for multi-dimensional interfaces between the public/children, authorities such as police,

Childline and Child Welfare Committees.

2) For stakeholders involved in the reporting mechanism as per POCSO and other laws such as the police, teachers and social workers, capacity building sessions must be held by appropriate authorities.

3) Special police training must be conducted with

participation not only from Juvenile Welfare Officers but also beat constables, because sometimes the police force guarding critical spaces for children such as schools are not aware of sexual abuse as an offence.

4) Audio-visual media may be used to spread awareness on child sexual awareness on a larger scale. For example, specific time slots may be booked on radio.

5) Teaching and non-teaching (support) staff must be provided trainings on various dimensions of sexual abuse such as prevention and reporting.

6) Information & education material (IEC) material should be displayed at locations such as schools, police stations and child welfare committee complexes.

7) Residence Welfare Associations (RWAs) must be made a part of the efforts to curb child sexual abuse since they play a critical role in ensuring safety in public spaces such as colonies and parks. Stakeholders' meetings with RWAs and similar stakeholders may be carried out under the leadership of District Magistrate or local elected representative of the government.

As the action plan was developed, it was decided that all stakeholders would undertake responsibilities in their respective capacities, and the plan will be concretized once these responsibilities are delegated.

## BADHTE KADAM LEADERS UNITE AT CORE COMMITTEE MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THEIR ISSUES

*Badhte Kadam is a federation of over 10,000 street and working children in North India, mentored by CHETNA. Functioning since 2002, the federation advocates for the rights of children by build peer support group systems. Each contact point consists of two leaders, each district is appointed a District Secretary. The federation is lead by a National Secretary. All leaders are democratically elected by children themselves, ensuring participation of children in the most optimum form. Core Committee Meeting is a common platform for all leaders to gather at a negotiated time and space. These meeting may be held at district or national level.*

A core committee meeting was conducted by leaders of South, South East and Old Delhi districts of Badhte Kadam. Observing



participation from 21 children in the presence of the national secretary Jyoti and Shambhu, the editor of Balaknama, children discussed the various issues that concern their day-to-day lives, and devised prospective solutions to them. 5 such meetings have been conducted- four at different contact points, and one at the head office of CHETNA. Various issues were shared by children in the meeting, such as lack of water at their place of

living, lack of safety for girls, improper behavior of the passers-by for children begging at traffic signals and improper disposal of dead bodies near their place of living. As some of these leaders were newly appointed, they were initially oriented with the strategies of Badhte Kadam and were given tips for capacity building by the existing leaders. The team of Badhte Kadam deliberated on these issues and decided to highlight them in public

through Balaknama. Building rapport with the police officials was noted as an effective strategy for resolving these issues, and it was decided that all leaders will visit their local police stations. It was also decided that contacting Childline (toll-free child helpline 1098) would also be useful in certain cases. Jyoti guided all newly appointed leaders saying that If they are unable to sort out their problems in one meeting, then they must follow up again.

## STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN CELEBRATE FESTIVALS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Over hundred street-connected children celebrated different festivals with street protection educators and their respective local authorities in full fervor. On Independence Day, the local police interacted with the children living under the IIT flyover and told them about the importance of the day. At Old Delhi Railway Station,

the local GRP (Government Railway Police) officials visited the contact point and talked to children about the spirit of Christmas and the upcoming new year. At Behlolpur Khadar, children celebrated Christmas with Childline- cutting a cake and talking about their new year resolutions.



### CHILDREN ASSESS SAFETY CONCERNS IN THEIR AREAS

With CHETNA's frontline workers, street connected children at various locations conducted an assessment of where they feel safe and unsafe around their area of living and working in their day-to-day lives. Children carried out this activity to develop a safety plan for themselves.

'All pictures have been taken with consent from children'