

Helping dreams to take shape

December 2014



Centre for Education and Communication

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Foreword or Photo

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PREFACE

An attempt has been made here in illustrating the stories of home-based craft workers through a photo book. This book intends to be different by drawing an insider's views of communities who depends on craft work through photographs and illustrations, accompanied by stories. The book has been produced by Centre for Education and Communication(CEC) as part of an outcome of the project, "Sustainable solutions in the fight against child labour in home-based craft production"- an action research project focusing on rights of children involved in home-based craft works and promoting their best interests by ensuring quality formal education through an integrated approach by gaining the support of all stakeholders. Therefore, the stories focus more on children and their parents engaged

in home-based craft work in their struggle to enjoy their childhood.

The project has been implemented by Fair Trade Forum-India, Centre for Education and Communication, and Traid-craft Exchange. The project is supported by the European Union. The objective of this project is to ensure the rights and development of children working in the home-based craft sector in India. To achieve this, the project developed a model to address child labour in the home-based crafts sector rigorous consultations among stakeholders. The model got tested in the selected locations/learning centres and their supply chains in the National Capital Territory of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh namely the Child Trust in Daryaganj, New Delhi and Raipura Firozabad, UP; TARA in labour

Colony and Nikaun, Firozabad, UP; Conserve in Bahadurgarh, Delhi NCR; Literacy India in Bhati and Neb Sarai, New Delhi; Bharat Janta Siksha Kendra in Jafrabad and Seelampur, New Delhi; HOPE worldwide(India) in Sangam Vihar, New Delhi; Society for Civil International in Nangloi, New Delhi; and HANDS in Shiv Nagar and Meena Nagar, Moradabad, UP.

The intervention followed an action-reflection-action model. Visits to project locations were important opportunities to engage with children, home workers, supply chain actors, learning centres, producer groups, community leaders and external stakeholders. Dissemination of project experience not only are important to track the course, direction and progress of the project, but also

to achieve a much wider outreach to share and reflect on the intended impact of the project. We are publishing the photo book to appeal for reflection of action of the project based on the realities and depicting things as they are of telling about stories of children, home-based workers, learning centres, producer groups, etc. from the craft centres. We would appreciate receiving your reflections.

Zeenat Afshan, Vinayaraj V.k. and Pallavi Mansingh coordinated the exposure visits, Photo Shoot and collection of information in the project locations and the production of this book. The photo book has been prepared by the PAN-India Foundation. We acknowledge with thanks the contribution of the PAN-India Foundation team.

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Crushing weight of shining wares



Another generation groans under the weight of shining wares

► Away from the heat and sweat of work Mantasaha at her Learning Centre in Shiv Nagar



► Buddhhan Bhai and his daughter at work

Poverty and half-a-dozen progenies – three girls and three boys – haven't robbed 50-year-old BuddhhanBhai of warmth and hospitality. He shoots down a suggestion to move to nearby Learning Centre – where his two kids go to study in the hope to join school – and offer tea to the narrator of these lines and the lensman accompanying him. So in deference to him the homemade steaming tea is savoured by the little crowd gathered around him. Yet, his own tumbler turns cold since he goes on to speak so consummately as to forget the tea. Soon he silences the concern about this by putting a bit of crimson hot brass fresh from flames into the tumbler and taking a sip. The little brass ingot again sets off steam through the tumbler and also a proof of three-and-half-decades of ceaseless tinkering that an artisan of his mettle has to undergo to fashion famed Moradabadi brassware. Yet, 12 hours of such hard work amid heat and sweat brings him just Rs 200 to Rs 250 a day. Flower vases and lamp goblets shine through his open furnace

Little Latif watches his father intently as a crimson hot brass artefact comes out of the fire



Saima weaving together rags to turn them into a rug



as his ten-year-old daughter Mantasha keeps it glowing by pumping air into it through turning a wheel in their modest Shiv Nagar abode that lies a couple of kilometers away on Jayantipur Road from Moradabad. His whole family, except his two grown up sons, work for hours either making brass artifacts or doing other odd works. The two sons work in the nearby town as salesmen with a cloth merchant. And yet together the family makes hardly enough to make ends meet.

Mantasha has a younger brother Latif and two sisters, Saima and Darakhshan. Both are elder to Mantasha. Only Saima could study upto sixth standard but soon ended up turning rags, scraps and bits of cloth into rugs through weaving and stitching them together. It takes her five to six hours to make a rug for which she gets ₹60. Their mother Asma too helps her besides doing household work.

Somehow the mother has been worried about her kids being mostly untouched by literacy and education to end up doing odd menial jobs that gave them little and uncertain income. Unlike her, Buddhan Bhai had no time to think about this and has generally been resigned to fate vis-à-vis the future of his children until volunteers from the Shiv Nagar Learning Centre (One) met him. Three years ago, in 2011 to be precise, he was not very forthcoming about sending Mantasha and her now seven-year-old brother Latif to the learning centre. He wanted first to be convinced by centre's teachers mainly Zamrood and Uma about the earnestness of their efforts so that it could equip kids and take them to proper schools. But few years' stint of the two kids at the learning centre has ignited hope in Buddhan Bhai. Now he says that he wants his children to get educated and join some other work as to get rid of his ill-paid work, involving back-breaking drudgery. Mantasha on her part

intends to become a teacher.

He is keen that his children get to know and understand the world around them better. The centre where Mantasha is preparing to join class third and Latif first has 41 children where boys continue to outnumber girls but in times to come girls enrolment is showing signs to pick up, says Mehnaz who looks after not only this but another learning centre that has already been running in the area and has 75 kids.

Since most of the children are engaged in home-based crafts where work is sourced through middlemen to them and their families and payments are made only when a sizeable amount of work is through, the learning centre's volunteers have introduced wage cards to keep track of the payment. Earlier, often the workers could not remember the amount becoming due to them because of their inability to read and write. But now the wage cards are filled through the help of volunteers working among the home-based craftspersons. And in the times to come the centre intends to strive to take the literacy level to a point where wage cards could be filled by the children being trained by them without any direct help.



Mantasha with other kids in the classroom of their Learning Centre

Mantasha does homework given by learning centre as her little brother looks on



Glass bangles that bring a dream to the brine filled eyes of a little girl



Sanjana ends up with headache and eyebrow pains and so do her mother, Rani, and two sisters. This is what propelled Sanjana's strong desire to become a doctor

Eight-year-old Sanjana has hit upon the idea to become a doctor despite being born in a poor family of glass bangle workers in the small hamlet called Nikaun. It nestles in the vast rural belt about 14 kilometres away eastwards from bustling Firozabad city that is renowned for its glassware and more so for gaudy bangles that are pride of most Indian women. A recent entrant to the village school, courtesy her stint at a voluntarily TARA run learning centre that helped her in getting trained for admission, the little girl's fantasy to grow into a medic is somehow not parents-or-elders-touted as is the case in most well to do middleclass homes. Instead, it is so palpably need-based that one has to talk to Sanjana and find out about this deep seated desire.

She keeps on rubbing her eyes like most other kids of her age and also grownups. The reason for this being that the work they do, taxing their eyes in hot, humid and smelly conditions for long hours. Like Sanjana most of the kids and also womenfolk throughout the village and its neighbourhood are glass bangle workers, swelling the ranks of home-based craft sector that subsidises the thriving bangle trade by keeping its demand up and rates affordably cheap. Families sit together for hours dyeing, or colouring glass bangles and putting tiny bits of mashed and virtually powdered mirror and beady spangles onto the bangles with or without using adhesives. Their hands have to move fast so as not to let the sticky surface of bangles dry before adding shine to it. The shiny bits have to be put with precision on the glassy surface of bangles. Thus, the workers eyes has to be transfixed without blinking on the glass rings held by their bare hands that get smeared with dyes and chemicals having a sharp and nauseating stench of their own. And yet before the work gets over, brocading the ban-



Sanjana with her mother



Sanjana at the Learning Centre

Glitter being added to bangles at the cost of hands getting afflicted



gles with fineries of tiny frills, their eyes get so tired as to start brimming and blinking and hands and fingers contaminated with sticky liquids and their stench hitting both nostrils and eyes.

Sanjana ends up with headache and eyebrow pains and so do her mother, Rani, and two sisters who work together. This is more so in summers. And it is also simply what propelled Sanjana's strong desire to become a doctor since there is no medical assistance in sight for the family in the wake of sickness. Thus, pain, irritation and sundry sicknesses have been a come-and-gone thing for the villagers who may feel the need for doctor and medicines but never thought of it as strongly as Sanjana's innocent, raw, rather pure human instinct could stumble on. More than anything else it is her chirpiness that brought this out instinctively to become an assertion, paving the way for her schooling under the aegis of the fee-free learning centre run by TARA that is dedicated to the development and empowerment of grassroot producers and marginalised sections of society.

Sanjana may or may not turn out to be a doctor since that lies in the realm of future. But as for the present state of affairs her resolve serves a stark lesson in community health or the lack of it. She has been able to diagnose the occupational hazard that women and children not only in her village face but what also dogs so many of them spread across Firozabad and its villages doing glass bangle work day out and day in. By doing such hard work through most of the day an average family like that of Sanjana makes around Rs 125 a day. Her father, Malare Lal, has to try his hand on farm or brick kiln work to add to this. And when there is no such work comes his way, he too joins the family to do the bangle work.

Worst among them are rashes that are caused when-

ever traces of dye, chemicals and adhesives are left on the body of workers. The learning centre helps children to get treatment by taking them to doctor. Eight-year-old Madhuri has to be treated for about six-months to cure rashes in her hands and feet. She is not only cured now of the affliction but is also able to attend the local Government School where she got admitted to second class after a little training at the learning centre.

Not only Madhuri but there are other successful learners from the centre who now attend regular school. Twelve-year-old Deendayal is enrolled in class seventh through centre's help and training. To focus on studies he is now a full time student. His eight-year-old sister, Anshu, also goes to the centre in the hope to join school. Their father Mayaram is a landless farmhand who depends for work under Government's job guarantee scheme. And when there is no work under the scheme, he goes to work at a brick kiln where he gets Rs 6000 a month. His wife Gulab Devi does bangle work besides working at farms as a wage earner to bring her bit to the family's income. And together with many like Gulab Devi TARA strives for social equity, justice and environmental sustainability whilst promoting Fair Trade. TARA projects have been working since the late sixties with economically disadvantaged artisans to create opportunities to improve their income and their children's future.

Tara has consistently campaigned against exploitation, poverty, illiteracy, child and bonded labour. Its projects could often bring socio-economic changes in the lives of many artisans and other stakeholders associated with it.



Sanjana and her folks at a normal day's work at their tenuous home



► Bangle work goes on amid house chores, courtesy Gulab Devi's little daughter. The little girl adds glitter to bangles giving the mother time for other work

A childhood shackled by pearl strewn strings



A little girl took to work as asthma robbed her father's will to paddle rickshaw anymore. Yet, she could put best foot forward towards school, courtesy HANDS - a voluntary effort

▶ For eight-year-old Shumaila relaxed moments like this are rare. Away from work, she falls in a contemplative mood at her Learning Centre



A part of quite a large family with virtually no main breadwinner left to feed – this is simply the story of a little girl lost into the sprawling slums of Shiv Nagar on the outskirts of Moradabad. Shumaila now eight-year-old spends better part of her day putting bright pearls onto the fine nylon or metal wires. Her five other siblings too sit along with her sharing work from jumble of thin wires and little heaps of pearls. At the end of the day, the children are paid a coin of Rs two for 20-metres of pearl studded wires which have many a uses and can easily be turned into a necklace or other trinkets. The pearl strewn strings can also be used to make a shining mesh or a wall hanging to lure and adorn middleclass homes by those who control the trade and thrive on it.

▶ Shumaila on way to Learning Centre along with another kid

◀ Back from school, Shumaila gets busy with making pearl studded artifacts





Yet, until nearly two years ago things were not so bad for little Shumaila. Her father Abdul Wahid paddled along the streets of Moradabad and earned about Rs 250 a day. But once the poor rickshaw puller fell sick and had to give up the only work that he could do. He turned out to be an asthmatic with hardly any strength left to pull the rickshaw any more. Now at about sixty he is mostly confined to the little home that the family has and spends his day puffing hookah.

He had little hope left when a team of volunteers from HANDS – Have A Notion of Developed Society – met him with the offer to take Shumaila to their learning centre that trains and equips children doing stray works at home for entering regular schools. With most of his ten children being illiterate like him and their mother, the suggestion to set Shumaila onto the road to school was like a dream coming true. Only one of Shumaila's eight sisters called Seema is a bit literate. The rest of them had never had any brush with any formal education. Now with four of Shumaila's sisters being married, the folks at home look at her with pride when the centre's teacher Tasneem confirms that Shumaila has been showing promise ever since joining the centre and can well realise her dream by becoming a teacher one day.

Cherishing this faint yet fervent hope Shumaila walks to the centre at seven in the morning where she likes to play on the terrace with other children though briefly amid their study that continues until noon. For the rest of her day is again caught up with spangly strings alongside other kids at home. Together they make somewhere between Rs 40 to Rs 60 a day. The money is given by the middleman only after a few days of work, adding uncertainty to the pittance that the children get. The kids also do the household work as their mother goes out and works as housemaid in the neighbourhood to bring her bit for the survival of the family.

Amid all round gloom hovering over the children, the

European Union funded HANDS learning centre project is the only source of comfort. Its volunteers not only offer a roadmap for schooling of child workers but also are conscious of the health hazards they face. Uma, a teacher at the centre points out the strain that is brought to children's eyes because of the pearled strings' work.

For over three decades HANDS has been working with rural artisans. It acts as an interface between community and different development partners through staunch commitment of its volunteers to rural upliftment. HANDS works on a range of development issues such as empowerment of rural artisans, education for the deprived children, creating alternative livelihood opportunities for the underprivileged, besides other key areas. In Moradabad HANDS runs two learning centers as a model under the child labour project to eliminate child labour from the supply chain in the handicraft sector.



▼ Forlorn looks in a lonely lane is palpable with the sad story of Shumaila's father

▶ Pushed to wall are not only poor women in Moradabad but toddlers too



▼ Shumaila breaks into a smile at her Learning Centre



▶ Kids at the Learning Centre

Goading poor children to go to school



A poor car cleaning boy is showing quite a bit of promise in a South Delhi school and longs to join IAS which may well be a far cry. Yet ...

▶ **Dusting others car with dreamy eyes, Prakash looks to a better future after getting right help from his Learning Centre**

A plethora of laws prohibit child labour throughout India. Yet, high poverty levels rampant among working classes, where income is low despite long and hard work, force children to work and earn from an early age. Many such unfortunate children born in poor families never see a school and are left unlettered throughout their lives. This holds true about working children who land up in big cities like Delhi from far off villages when their parents or families migrate in search of work and vocation. Government assistance is often difficult to come by and a humane and compassionate approach to save the poor children from illiteracy is also rare.

Yet, 14-year-old Prakash has been among the lucky few to join a Government senior secondary level school called Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya, Kutub No 1 in South Delhi. Despite working as a car-cleaner, he studies in class eighth of the school. This could be possible because of his two-year stint at a voluntarily run learning centre under Literacy India programme by a highly motivated team of young persons who visit poor families directly and share with them the paramount need to educate children in order to fight poverty and illiteracy. Once the volunteers from the Centre prevail upon the family head or elders, the working children attend the centre where they are prepared to join regular schools

Prakash is fatherless. His mother, who works as a domestic help, has been quite forthcoming about the need to educate Prakash when volunteers from the learning centre met her. Youngest among three sisters and a brother, Prakash lost his father over five years ago and the family its income. Prakash's father worked with Delhi Jal Board or Water Works on a contractual basis after migrating from Nepal and joining the endless stream of migrants from UP, Bihar and other States that swells the



▶ **With satchels on shoulders Prakash sets out for school**

ranks of the Capital's workforce. The father had taken to alcohol and his death is suspected to have been speeded up because of liquor abuse. The family lives in impoverished quarters of Neb Sarai in South Delhi on way to famous Qutab Minar.

Prakash's mother makes about Rs 6,000 a month but has to pay a rent of Rs 4,000 out of it for a ten by ten feet tenement that provides her and the children shelter. By cleaning cars Prakash makes about Rs 3,000 a month. Together the two are barely able to make the ends meet. Yet, the school admission has ignited hope among the inmates of the family and also through the poor neighbourhood. So much so that Prakash longs to become an IAS – Indian Administrative Service – officer so that he is able to make a difference in the lives of the poor children.

He feels so impressed by the centre and its teachers who prepared him to get into the school that he still visits the centre regularly and takes part into its sports and



▶ Prakash is often back to Learning Centre after school hours to take part in rehearsals for the plays that the centre stages

▶ Prakash's mother brushes his hairs with her hands as he is about to hurry up for school



theatre activities alongside other children. Being older among them Prakash now often trains the centre's aspirants to join the school by helping and training them in curricular and extracurricular activities.

Encouraged by success stories of learners like Prakash, the centre has added a computer literacy drive under its Gyantantra (a term derived from Gantantra that means republic so as to connote Republic of Knowledge in this case) programme. The centre fervently hopes that this would prove as a valuable learning aid and help in further empowering poor children.

Literacy India was set up in 1996 as a non-profit organisation with the objective of empowering underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient. Literacy India has clearly set the three E's – Education, Empowerment and Employment – as its goal to be achieved by the next decade. Their thrust is to impart basic education besides exposing students to various vocational skills in performing arts and use of computers including the art of animation. Literacy India is focused on bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of underprivileged children through education. They are looking at transforming the educational landscape by introducing innovative methods. It has created an environment where the children are encouraged to develop personality and gain confidence.

Literacy India aims at creating community based livelihood enhancement models to achieve reduction in poverty in rural and semi urban areas like Gurgaon district in Haryana on a sustainable basis. Its purpose is to enable most vulnerable groups of the villages to contribute more effectively to the development of their communities by acquiring new productive skills.

▶ Young yet a fanciful learner wonders why can't she too play with the computer keys



▶ Laptops at Neb Sarai Learning Centre in New Delhi



► Lost on the long roads of Delhi are many a childhoods like that of this little girl. She sells bouquets to motorists without any hope to see a school.

Breaking the cycle of poverty and illiteracy



Thrown to the lowly job of domestic help by sudden downturn of circumstances, two sisters from Delhi's walled city gear up to take school exam

▶ Umpteen prayers in early teens that go alongside Areeba's days that are a mix of learning and earning through hard work

Thirteen-year-old Areeba has been one of those few lucky girls from an old Delhi's Daryaganj alley who could make upto the tenth class in the local government school. Yet, soon fate took such a downturn as to force her to drop out from school before she could become a matriculate. Her reduced circumstances pushed her not only out of the school but also to serve as a domestic help in the house of a well off distant relative along with her elder sister.

She did not like the maid's job and thus was sucked by home-based craft of stitching and embroidering long overall veils that are donned by most Muslim women of the area whenever they step out of their homes. She had almost resigned to fate when help came through European Union backed sustainable solutions project tailor-made for poor girls like her. The intervention by volunteers sent to her under the project run by the Child Trust offered her the opportunity to not only join the informal learning centre which could prepare her to undertake matriculation programme of the NIOS – or the National Institute of Open Schooling – but also to get vocational training in cutting, stitching and tailoring attires of different sorts to augment her income.

This happy turn of events also rescued her sister from domestic help circuit. Tasmia, who is two year older than Areeba took to vocational course run for future beauticians under the vocational training programme funded by EU alongside preparing to undertake the class eleventh exam of



▼ Areeba at Learning Centre



Girls at work at the Vocational Training Centre



Areeba works at home

the NIOS that also holds once a week classes for girls like Tasmia and Areeba.

Both the sisters have now a lot to look forward to from the days of giving up their education in the wake of marriage of their lone eldest brother who moved out of the family's abode with his wife, leaving his two sisters in the cold.

Areeba says that her vocational tailoring could bring clients directly to her, which can certainly turn out to be far better than Rs 50 a week that she got as a domestic hand, or Rs 30 a day by a day-long stitching and embroidering veils as per the rates for outsourced tasks brought by local contractor. This is more so since such designer's veil sell for Rs 2,500 a piece in the market.

What is even more heartening is that the two sisters are not alone to be benefitted by the EU

project. There are as many as 27 children, aged between six and eighteen who have found way to proper schools of the city via the Child Trust's learning centre. The present strength of the centre which started with ten learners has now 22 of them. Soon some more among the lot are likely to land up in regular schools with consistent help of the teachers at the centre and more than those who leave the centre for good can well join to keep the trend going.

Centre's Razia Fidai has umpteen examples to cite where education of children turns out to be the last priority among the poor and even not so poor inhabitants of the walled city in rush to make a living or to seek better living. Besides, this madarsa education based on religious training is often thought to be sufficient for children, leaving them with the only option to join madaras again as teachers or to work in mosques as priests or their assistant.

For women even this career option is further constricted. And, thus, a turnaround of attitude is not difficult on being pursued with earnestness under projects like Fidai and her colleague Afnan work for under the Child Trust.



Hands adept at making right cuts are watched keenly at the Vocational Training Centre

Little souls and buttons of a mighty trade



learning centre lends a helping hand to a little girl trapped by poverty and illiteracy despite working from home for the mighty garment trade run from Delhi's Gandhi Nagar

▶ Little Urooj and her worried, vacant looks amid bricks of her tenuous shelter tell the need for building the future of kids like her brick by brick

Pale and grim-faced, 11-year-old girl, Urooj, moves along a childhood that does not know any joy, or playfulness. Other kids of her age may loathe it to do without them. Hers is a workaday life of daily drudgery. Unmindful of the world around her she sits for hours with her mother in a hovel at Janata Mazdoor Colony, near Jafrabad, in East Delhi too stoically to look beyond its confines. The reason for this being that she is a home-based craftsperson in a thriving garment trade that merrily goes on from nearby Gandhi Nagar, shooting up India's production and export charts while employing scores of less fortunate children like her on an informal basis through a team of contractors.



▶ Urooj and another kid at the Learning Centre



▶ Urooj with her teacher at her Learning Centre

The children alongwith the women of many a household around hers end up working through day and night fixing buttons and cutting rough or thread-ridden, though not exactly frayed, edges of freshly turned out denim jeans and jackets from hundreds of tailoring units, or <Karkhanas> spread across the area. This is how Urooj, her four out of six siblings and their mother keep their body and soul together ever since Urooj's parents fell out. The mother, Shabana, was forced to move out from her husband's abode at Loni in Ghaziabad on the



▶ **Urooj and her mother are deeply lost in cutting threads to smoothen jeans' rough edges as the youngest kid of the family readies another set of trousers for them**

outskirts of Delhi about three years ago and landed up at her brother's JanataMazdoor Colony tenement. Two of Urooj's brothers were left at Loni with their father Rishad and his mother doing the daily chores like looking after and milking a few buffaloes that the family has.

Being the eldest girl child, Urooj has to look after her three younger siblings. She gets up at dawn, cleans their tenuous dwelling and readies it for work where piles of jeans await to be cleared with properly studded buttons and smooth edges before it gets too late. Working overtime with her mother has made Urooj quite adept in the trade. She proudly says that she can cut the thread from a pile of 25 jeans in an hour's time or even less. She is even more dexterous in putting buttons on jeans, courtesy her fast moving fingers. Thread snipping from a pair of jeans brings her half-a-rupee and buttons put on five pairs of jeans a rupee. An hour's work at full pace fetches her twelve-and-a-half rupees. But there are lean seasons that come generally between April and August when Urooj and her mother's income takes a downslide because work is difficult to come by from contractors.

Shabana calls her and that of her daughter's income a pittance, lamenting that for years the rates for the job done by them have been the same though prices of jeans and jacket sold all over the city have gone up quite a bit. "If we complain about the rates, the contractor would simply stop work coming to us and there would be many others to grab it at the rates that may get," she remarks with a heavy heart. Finding their lives to have reached a dead end of a back-breaking drudgery and little income, Shabana and her daughter had little hope to break the vicious cycle of poverty, squalor and illiteracy until meeting the volunteers from Bharat Jan Shiksha Kendra (BJSK), a self-help group. They reached her and

took Urooj and her other siblings under its humane fold driven by passion and warmth to train unschooled children engaged in home-based craft production and prepare them to join regular schools. Urooj besides working from home for multi-million jeans trade, now plans to join class third of the nearby Government-run school and is getting equipped for this at the European Union funded learning centre called Bharat Janata School that the BJSK runs near her colony. She can now not only put buttons on jeans but has also learnt English alphabet where she can among other words spell J..E..A..N..S correctly. This comes to her with a natural smile and glimmer of hope in eyes.



◀ **Loads of work: Urooj's sibling moves with a heap of trousers from their house to the contractor**

▶ **Chained to work: A kid giving last touches to jeans trousers**



Not just this, the centre's initiative has brought a new consciousness to Urooj's family and other households like hers. Now the residents of Janata Colony expect and look for things like ration card which many of them don't have. This they are seeking in order to have access to Government schemes and assistance meant for the poor. The centre helps them by making them aware of their entitlements and ways to reach and realize them.



▶ A kid in the hands of kid: Eight-year-old Madhuri is able to play with a lamb again besides attending school after being equipped for admission. Yet, until a few months ago this looked impossible as her hands and feet were ridden with rashes brought by bangle work. Through Learning Centre's help she has not only been cured but now looks to life again.

...lest law's labour for poor kids be lost



A municipal park that was turned into a garbage dump has been cleaned and started humming with children as a learning hub for poor kids comes up over there

► Kids crowd around a teacher at Delhi's bustling Learning Centre at Jaffrabad

Law may spare children from work yet life may force them to hard labour for sheer survival's sake. For poorer sections of the society this is a norm and seldom an exception. Nowhere else in Delhi this is as palpable as towards the north-east of the Capital around Jaffrabad that includes impoverished settlements like JanataMazdoor Colony and Ghounda. Hundreds of closely juttied, small, rickety, matchbox like shelters lined through narrow alleys strewn with open, overflowing and stinking drains house mainly poor Muslim migrants drawn mostly from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. A gaggle of young and old men, women and children swarm the area. Together and yet unmindful of each other they work hard daily to eke out a living and make ends meet. Born in abject poverty as most have been, they expect little from life and can hardly visualise any better future for their off springs than what has been their own lot.

Sadly, this among other things robs law of its laudable suppositions vis-à-vis children like right to education and equal opportunity to all children. From tiny-tots to teens school is distant dream. And there is no escape from work. Yet, this cannot be categorised as child labour in the strict legal sense. They do the odd manual jobs coming the way of the grownups in their families through outsourcing from the bustling garment trade in nearby Gandhi Nagar. Thus, they assist mainly the grown up womenfolk of their house for official consumption and for legal purposes whereas in actual practice they are forced into child labour that law prohibits. Contractors bring odd works like cutting the rough edges of freshly turned out jeans and jackets and fixing buttons supplied by them. The work is given to men but is actually done by women and children for as paltry a sum as a rupee for



▼ Kids hold aloft their exercise book as their teacher looks on



▼ Cramped together are learners trying the make it to regular school

▲ A kid tries to scribble first letters of her life at Jaffrabad Learning Centre



putting buttons on five pairs of jeans trousers.

This multitude of poor yet hard working people cry for the need of positive intervention from social entrepreneurs which has been difficult to come by. Yet, eleven years ago a voluntary group called Bharat Janata Shiksha Kendra funded and supported by Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) made a small move to prepare some of the poor kids engaged in home based crafts for admission to regular schools. They opened a learning centre called Bharat Janata School to train un-schooled children. The training school was opened under a shed by clearing an abandoned municipal park of its garbage that was earlier being dumped there.

In the beginning it was difficult to convince inhabitants of JanataMazdoor Colony to send their kids to the learning centre that had prepared a roadmap to take the children to mainstream schools. This programme's coordinator, Jitendra recalls "many parents were skeptical in the beginning. There was a boy whose father was strongly against sending his son to the learning centre, thinking it to be waste of time. Yet, one day the man himself came to drop his son to the centre and said that the boy would come thereon regularly. Later, the boy's mother revealed that the father underwent a change of heart on seeing their child scribbling the alphabets at home."

Soon the area got abuzz by the successful preparation at the centre of several kids who entered the local municipal school. And many children started trooping in to join the centre. Yet, several of them came without washing their face. Thus, the centre's teachers Kavita and Lakshmi had to put a mirror at the school and turned out the kids before it after washing them. The exercise could bring cleanliness among children, says Jitendra,

who happens to be husband of Kavita. Lakshmi is a colleague's wife, he adds. Both the teachers initially braved taunts from the locals who have been unused to respectable folks coming anywhere close to their quarters. Undaunted as the two remained, their tormentors soon realised their folly and recognised their work and contribution to kids' life.

So much so that once they countered a move by some in the area to accuse the centre of land grabbing through occupying the park. Scores of men of women, including some in veils, marched to the nearby police station and thwarted the move.

Today the centre has a room to house young learners both in mornings and evenings and in between it imparts vocational training to relatively grown up girls who learn measuring, marking and cutting cloth before tailoring and stitching. Through assistance coming from European Union, the centre plans to add a few more courses like that for beauticians and computer literacy.

Last but not the least, the centre has got endorsement for training kids for schools and imparting vocational training by local Madarsa heads where children were supposed to mainly go to earlier. One of the Madarsas in the area has taken a teacher sent by the centre. He teaches English, Hindi, Mathematics and Science. Another Madarsa keeps books on modern subjects provided by the centre as it keeps committed to do its bit and more amid the huge need for education and training that the sprawling Jaffrabad area of so many poor, needy and deserving kids poses all the time.



▼ Sitting in a neat row are kids making first move towards school



▶ A learner 's sharp gaze at her teacher



▼ Study at the Learning Centre means a break from work



▼ A classless classroom at the Learning Centre



Learning numerals ◀

Enabling poor to get their bit



A 12-year-old girl shows rare grit by making to class seventh in a regular school despite working quite a bit to make a living

▶ Tiny Bindis worn by Hindu women takes a heavy toll upon those who make this little identity wear. Twelve-year-old Fatima spends hours making Bindis in her rented shelter in Nangloi in West Delhi

Under Section 3 of Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 child labour is banned in India. Yet, home-based or domestic works are exempted from the ambit of this Act. Government is yet to plug this loophole through amendment to the Act. Thus, commercial exploitation of children in the name of in-house work goes unchecked. Often scores of impoverished parents and families have no way to feed their offspring. This inevitably pushes the kids into home-based crafts practiced in low-income households as child labours. At a tender age they become unstated labourers vis-à-vis the law; and work from the confines of home, missing out essentials like school and education.

Twelve-year-old Fatima could well have continued to be such a child. Yet, she has moved a bit away for good. She is a child labour at home and yet goes to Government Senior Secondary Girls School near her rented abode in Nangloi slums in West Delhi. She is in class seventh. She has been lucky to be driven to a little safe zone, courtesy SCI – Service Civil International-run School-cum-Learning-Centre. This European Union-backed institution draws children working in homes and, thus, dogged by illiteracy and benighted adulthood and trains to enable them to join proper schools.

Until a few years ago Fatima had little chance to see a school. Nearly two decades ago her father, Mohammed Sabrati, a native of Madhubani district in Bihar, migrated to Delhi in search of work and vocation. He followed his brother Allah Baksh Ansari who was in the trade of making Bindis – the round, colorful, velvety, tiny ornamental wear stuck on foreheads by Hindu women mostly as a token of pride and identity.

School has taken Fatima a step ahead





▼ Bindi work in full swing at Fatima's home

So now a large family of 12 cramped in three small rooms spends their time, making Bindis briskly by gumming and pasting the back of the Bindi velvet, sizing and cutting it through dies and then putting the finished Bindis on to a paper from where they can be plucked and used. The work order alongwith the raw material comes through a Bindi trader from Sadar Bazar. All member of the family work for 14 to 16 hours a day, making Bindis to get Rs 100 each at the end of it. Yet, Bindi work goes on at full steam for nearly half the year before it turns lean.

Children are generally drawn to work through the non-school hours. But they often have to skip the school, or learning centre in peak Bindi season to cope with the huge quantum of work. This helps the family to save a bit for the lean times of the year that the trade invariably undergoes.

The learning centre conducts classes for non-school going children as also school going children from nursery to Class fifth. Due to SCI's intervention, Fatima got admitted at its Nangloi centre and soon moved on to the Government School in 2012 in class fifth. Two years later she is not only in class seventh but also dreams to become a doctor.

The SCI learning centre draws teachers from within the workers' community. Mamta, aged 20, is a faculty member at the Nangloi centre. Earlier, she studied at the centre and is now pursuing graduation. After she completed 12th standard, Mamta's father forbade her to continue further studies. He relented only after she got job at the learning centre. Now she is able to pursue

her higher education along with the job at the centre. Mamta has, indeed set an example that inspires others like Fatima despite tremendous odds faced by them.

One of the worst among them is lack of proper identification papers and proofs like address and income. Often poor families doing stray jobs to keep body and soul together cannot access government schemes and assistance meant for their class because of this. The cen-



▶ A teacher with kids at Learning Centre



tre helps children and their families in this sphere too by convincing the authorities and landlords renting shelters about the need to show compassion and help in getting their bit, if not more.

Service Civil International is an international non-government voluntary service organisation and peace movement with 43 branches and groups worldwide. The organization was founded in 1920. Since 1920 SCI organised work camps and activities with no formal structure in France, Switzerland, Great Britain, India, and other countries. In India, SCI is working in Nangloi, Delhi JJ colony.

▼ Mamata who teaches at the Learning Centre helps her family that makes envelops back home

It is a lesser lane in Moradabad where children often have to go unschooled amid poverty and squalor. Their lives remain as empty as is the lane



Auspicious bangles that choke childhood



Firozabad's bangle trade has been casting a ring of disease and death over workers of all ages often leading to death of grownups and misery for young ones

► Bangle worker Pooja looks vacantly at the doorsteps of her Raipura house in Firozabad with no signs of hope. Her workday life never gives a chance to think of future

A sharp nozzle spews red hot flames in a dingy and as small a room as seven by five feet; and right before it sits a 12-year-old girl holding a round rolling pin like log loaded with glass bangles. She takes one bangle after the other off her glass arsenal with great care to put it onto the sharp flame where the intense heat joins the loose ends of each bangle.

Despite all care twelve-year-old Pooja's hands do not always escape without burns and cuts. She has a scar on one of her hands but worse are the scars in her mind that bring back what her poor father had undergone towards the last couple of years of his rather short life. Bidyaram was in his early forties when he died of what looked like to be tuberculosis, leaving behind his poor wife and their five daughters.

In Raipura about two kilometers off famed bangle city of Firozabad Bidyaram is not alone to die a painful death. Respiratory disorders are common among bangle workers. But this is yet to be categorised as an occupational hazard that goes hand in hand with the predominant bangle trade of the little village, bringing its heat and kerosene fumes to ruin lives and health of poor workers. Working before flame in fume laden small rooms also hurts the eyes quite badly. And what adds insult to injury is lethal chemicals and paints whose dabs bring colour to bangles and diseases to their unfortunate handlers.



▼ Pooja at work



▼ Pooja with bangle workers

The bangle trade threatened to drag little Pooja like her two elder sisters Ruby and Anjali completely into its fold when their father died about four years ago. Both the elder sisters had to stop going to the nearby voluntarily run learning centre since the two had to work to keep their hearth and home going. This has been more so since their mother Krishna Devi is too weak to work anymore and is virtually bedridden because of her endemic backache.

The three girls work hard to eke out a couple of two Rupees 2 coins for joining no less than ten dozens of bangles at a brisk pace. Through this going rate for bangle joints, the three of them together make nearly Rs 180 a day but their monthly earning seldom crosses Rs 4,000 since there are a few lean days when the work quantum either takes a downslide or suffers because one or the other sister falling sick.

Whenever someone in the family falls sick, the money for treatment is lent by the contractor who sources them the bangle work. Thus, their dependence of the family on him is complete.

Both 14-year-old Ruby and Anjali at 16 lament their inability to attend the learning centre anymore. Yet, the two found little consolation through the fact that their youngest sibling Pooja could replace them by joining the centre in the hope to enter a regular school after getting

trained at the centre.

Yet, poverty threatened to drag Pooja back from the centre in order to work at home more and save the family's little income. Until recently Pooja began bangle work alongwith her two sisters at four in the morning and took break from seven to early afternoon so as to be at the centre. But at the time of writing these lines poor Pooja somehow stopped coming to the centre, posing a challenge to the Child Trust run learning centre to bring Pooja back to study. The Trust besides running the learning centre is also working to address issue like child labour, child abuse and trafficking through campaigns, networking and facilitating steps for rehabilitation.

Another fear that dogs Pooja's family is that Anjali may soon have to be married off like her two elder sisters, robbing Krishna Devi and her two younger daughters of ablest two hands that work incessantly shaping bangles and adding up income. Sadly, the bangles that signify the difference between womanhood and widowhood in popular Indian consciousness fail to bring cheer to Anjali's family at the thought of her marriage. And yet they go on making bangles all the time throughout the year.

▶ Playing with flames are bangle workers hands that often get burns



▶ Pooja's sister at bangle work



Bangles' blight over Firozabad retold



▼ Untold story of a bangle

Bangles too can tell a tale of disease and death amid appalling conditions and punishing hours of work for those engaged in the trade

You know that none had ever the audacity to bell a cat. Yet, I could do that to women. My sheer clinks can tell the world that a woman is around. They are like a whisper, a signal, or a token about not only women but also womanhood since time immemorial. I do not know when or how man or men thought of me and how I came into being; nor how I caught women's fancy. I do not know whether homo sapiens first thought of me, or wheel took their imagination to begin with. Like wheel, I too have a perfect round shape. Yet, wheel has been changing from the simple ones made to pull carts to those moving cars and aircraft. But I have been stranded, stuck, confined and trapped in women's wrists. You could have well guessed by now that I am bangle, taking umpteen colours to please and make women proud down the ages.

My myriad shapes in gold, silver, bronze, brass and wood turned out to be, or remain, only a few ever since I hit upon and slipped into glass. So much so that glass became my soul, bone, blood and marrow. I owe my glassy incarnation to Firozabad that stands for and means a shire of lights. Yet, as the wheels of time moved around me in the city of my birth, I threw an ever lengthening shadow upon the poor hands that give me birth. They don't put me in any incubator, but take me literally through fire through their delicate and fragile hands unmindful of the slow, yet incessant baking and intermittent burns that they have to bear all the time.

Fumes accompany the fire. And the stench of kerosene can be nauseating. The temperature in

▲ A girl loads bangles onto a rolling pin before embellishing them with glittering coats



the labour room where the multitudes of my tribe are born everyday round the year is ever getting high. The poor souls that bring me to the world are ready to withstand all the hardships for my sake till their last breath. This has been the case like so many others with poor Pooja's father whose life was cut short at 45 when she was just eight. Undeterred by heavy breathing amid coughing, he struggled daily to shrug off death and work for my sake till he had to give up so sadly in the wake of what was feared to be tuberculosis.

In the rush of work in Firozabad disease are seldom diagnosed and deaths are hardly mourned since that may call to sit back, shutting the work and put one's head down. And so Pooja too lost no time in the wake of her father Bidyaram's death since work for my sake has to go on. And it goes on merrily amid disease, death and miseries brought by them. The kerosene propelled flames ever burn as I am mould and undergo, rounding, joining and



▼ Bangle ring is complete as its joints are fused before flame



► Bunch of bangles like this are called Tora. A Tora has 296 bangles. And for fusing the joints of a Tora of bangles fetches Rs 4 for the poor bangle workers

fusing of my rounded tips into rings, smoothening of my surface and their designing through a motorised device. Scores of children with grownups work ceaselessly till the time comes for my hill polishing that adds further glitter and shine on my exterior surface.

And this is also not without pain as you must have noticed through the story of little Sanjana. Her eyes get so hurt through hours of polishing that she started fancying the idea of becoming a doctor to tackle this in her and others' case.

Thus, I find the silent sufferings that go on behind my clinks to be too much to remain unheard anymore by you. I wonder for how long the sufferings of those shaping, creating and bringing me to you would remain under wraps and when the wheels of time would turn the world's attention to them.



▼ Stacks of bangle on the move

Annexure A - Profile To Project Partners

Fair Trade Forum-India

Fair Trade Forum-India (FTF-I) is the National Network for Fair Trade in India. It works with more than 200,000 producers - artisans and farmers - through more than 100 member organisations. FTF-I promotes environment friendly practices in processing range of products at the production and ethical consumption levels. It also works actively to improve market conditions, to build capacity, and in Fair Trade assessment and development of supply chains. Promotion of Fair Trade in India includes particular emphasis on young consumers and the corporate sector. In India, Fair Trade movement is getting momentum at consumer level, as a tool to realise sustainable consumption, which would enable consumers to give due consideration to the development needs of the marginalised, while making purchasing decisions. For marginalized producers- artisans & farmers, it is an opportunity to make things in dignity, earn dignified income and work for sustainable development.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft is a trading company and a development charity working together which established in 1979. It gives a distinctive perspective on how trade can be made to work for poor. The objective of Traidcraft is to relive poverty in the developing world and, in particular, to ensure that Traidcraft remains focused on its goal to fighting poverty through trade and stays true to its foundation principles.

Centre for Education and Communication

CEC was conceived in 1982 by a group of activist intellectuals as a center for workers education in Delhi. The mission of CEC is to build a wider horizon with labour and small producer and to uphold the rights as well as to enhance their dignity and power. CEC develops key ideas, policies and solutions that address changes in the world of work and engages with organizations of workers, small producers and like-minded entities.

