

ICLRP Jaipur
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In February 1999 ICLRP Jaipur also known Chaya Project started working with rag picker children in one slum called Gopal Bari, in Jaipur city. The concentration was mainly on education and health. And through the project's intervention one could see a marked improvement in the lives of the people. In the year 2000 the project decided that there is need to spread our boundaries to involve child laborers as well. Jaipur is known for the gem polishing industry. So three of the poorest areas within the walled city of Jaipur were included, namely Pheel Khana, Basbadanpura and Shastri Nagar. Finally interventions among the runaway children were initiated with the beginning of a shelter home for them.

Currently the project runs 6 NFE centers in the various target areas. Health programmes are undertaken in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society and other NGOs. The project also runs 2 shelter homes for the runaway children. One is for boy's up to the age of 14 years who can be rehabilitated into formal school and the other is near the railway station for the older boys, which is used only to sleep in the night. A team of 5 members and 6 NFE teachers, 1 teacher for the adolescent girls, 1 teacher for the runaway children, a sports teacher and a cook for the shelter home man the project.

The project works with street and working children in the city of Jaipur. The three main target groups are:

1. Child Laborers in the home based gem polishing industry
2. Rag picker children in the urban slums
3. Runaway children at the railway station.

For the child laborers the interventions are in the areas of education, health, economic development and leadership development. Children receive basic education, receive health education and are medically examined on a regular basis, receive life skill education as well as general health awareness programmes on issues such as HIV/AIDS.

In the case of rag picker children health is the prime issue. So children are regularly taught about personal hygiene. Their nutritional status is being determined so we have demonstrations on low cost nutritional diet and also relevant health awareness programmes can be initiated. Regular HIV/AIDS awareness programmes are being conducted.

For street children also health is the primary concern. So in our health awareness programmes we discuss issues such as HIV/AIDS, the evils of inhaling glue. The counseling component is provided by another NGO, which also works with street children.

Well being of 375 child laborers in the gem polishing industry, 250 rag picking children, & 50 runaway children evidenced by 2004 AD.

CHILDREN AT RISK BECOME AGENTS OF CHANGE, EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS AND LIVE A LIFE OF HOPE IN THE CITY OF JAIPUR

Chaya Project is one of the projects under the India Child Labor Rehabilitation Programme, which works amongst the street and working children in the city of Jaipur.

According to the 1991 census there were 17.4 million child laborers in India. Independent and NGO sources put the figure at 44 million. Therefore one can see that this is indeed an alarming situation with no easy solutions.

World Vision India believes that an integrated approach is needed to model our response to this gigantic problem. There is an outright need to release children from labor in hazardous industries, which should be followed by meeting their long term educational, health and economic needs.

The project thus commenced work in the month of February 1999 in the city of Jaipur. According to UNICEF there are 13,000 children out of 2,00,000 workers in the home based gem polishing industry and 50,000 street children, which includes rag pickers in the city of Jaipur.

The city of Jaipur in the state of Rajasthan is the main processing center of colored gems. Eighty-four precious and semi – precious stones, both natural as well as synthetic, are processed in the city. Gem polishing industry in the city is predominantly unorganized in nature, operating through various small workshops situated in residential buildings spread over large areas in the old city. It is a home based industry even though there may be a few large factories.

The gem polishing areas of the city have a large concentration of Muslim child workers. These areas are thickly populated; with majority of the houses being double storied and built close to one another. The family size is 10 – 12 members on an average.

The work is carried out in rooms at homes, which face the street. Poor ventilation and low light cause a lot of discomfort. The children have no time for recreation and relaxation. Dangerous processes of shaping and polishing the stones require that the children hold them close to the rotating wheel and this has resulted in innumerable cuts, blisters and wounds. The constant dipping of cut hands in polishing agents sometimes results in the wounds becoming gangrenous. Eyesight is also adversely affected due to the continuous staring at gems the whole day and stiff postures due to the static working positions. At times the children have to continually dip their hands in cold water while processing the gems and then they become ill with fever. Their shy and closed nature reveals that they have not been exposed to the outside world beyond their communities and units.

In the case of rag picking the children are engaged in work, which has no dignity. But poverty has forced these children to work with rags. Very often one can see children sitting on the roadside collecting rags and sometimes eating the food thrown away by the richer sections of society. Most of these children are found to have bad habits like chewing gutkha or pan, which they have been encouraged to indulge in by their parents. The police and society at large that look upon them as thieves and vagabonds harass them. The children are extremely dirty and usually the smaller kids do not wear any clothes. But they seem very happy despite all the dirt. Many of the children have boils and cuts on their body. In the rag picking areas it was found that 65% of the targeted population of children chew tobacco, gutkha and supari. Few children also drink liquor on special occasions. Gambling and smoking can be easily seen among both boys and girls in the community in the age group of 10 – 14 yrs. But even though they have seen so much of the outside world their hopes and dreams seem to be limited to their experiences.

Generally a rag picker child would aspire to become a policeman.

The project believes that it is the right of every child worker to enjoy the highest level of health possible and to access health and medical services. Hence the project is part of an advocacy group in Jaipur, which is called the National Campaign for the Rights of children.

Hence the interventions are in the areas of: -

EDUCATION

80% of gem polishing, rag picking & runaway children enrolled in formal/non formal schools.

At present 206 children are attending our NFE center which is manned by trained NFE teachers. Some of the teachers are from the community. The plan for sustainability is to monitor it through the CBOs and generate funds through fee collection from children.

HEALTH

Children at risk have access to and knowledge about basic health facilities, improved hygiene and reproductive health.

The project conducts regular health check up camps in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society.

St. Johns Ambulance has trained the project team members on administering first aid. This is especially relevant in the rag picker community. The community members have been trained as well. But the next step is to send the community representatives for the certificate course at St Johns Ambulance.

The project conducts street plays, picture story telling and one-to-one counseling as well as one-to-group counseling on HIV/AIDS. Printed literature is also distributed to the community. This is done in collaboration with the Healthy Highway Project.

The project has also conducted a health communication workshop for adolescent boys in collaborating with Vikalp an NGO based in Udaipur.

Other ongoing programmes are awareness programmes on personal hygiene, safai abhiyan (cleanliness drive), health messages being communicated in community meetings, etc.

Life skill education for teenagers.

Recreational trips for children and adolescents.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

50% children acquire alternative life skills and have better job options.

The children are being provided with opportunities for a better future in a two-pronged programme.

The first is providing skill/vocational training for the youth in the community so that they would have better prospects for the future. Hence 60 children have been enrolled for computer education. 7 runaway boys have undergone driving training. And in the future various skills training programmes are being organized as they emerge from the discussions with the community through the programmes being offered by Shramik Vidhyapeeth a vocational training

institution of the Government of India.

The second step is to help raise the income level of the parents and thus the grant assistance programme is being undertaken for the community. Here all items purchased for the initiation of a small business by identified families in the community has a community contribution of 25%.

The project works with 655 children in gem polishing industry and rag picking community from 376 families. Of this total, 452 are children in the gem polishing industry and 203 are rag-picking children.

The project works with 267 working girls and 388 working boys.

94% of the children live in nuclear families

Among these children about 26% are living in extremely difficult circumstances, i. e. staying alone, or have a disability or living with single parents.

Of the targeted children only 29% attend school while the remaining 71% are engaged in work – either gem polishing or rag picking.

There is a high drop out rate among the children.

A total of 362 children in all our target communities have undergone a thorough medical examination.

The boys in the shelter home attend the local Pentecostal church every Sunday. They have devotions everyday and many of the boys know how to pray. They attend VBS at the Rajasthan Bible Institute and have won prizes in the contests organized during the VBS. There is a marked change in their behavior when they enter the shelter home.

Three runaway boys who have accepted the Lord have now been admitted in a hostel run by the Emmanuel Bible Institute at Kota. They are attending regular school.

The rag picker community was relocated 20kms outside the city limits to a place called Bagrana in the month of April, this year. The project stood by the community in its time of need. As of today the Jaipur Development Authority has approved the construction of an NFE center in the community.

The NFE centers are equipped with teaching aids prepared by the teachers themselves during the 21-day training that was conducted in collaboration with an NGO called Bodh Shiksha. Five runaway boys have now learnt 4 wheeler driving and two boys have obtained their driving license.

80 community members have received grant assistance as part of the economic development programme. The businesses are as varies as running a juice making store, fodder shop, beef shop, ration store, gem polishing unit, etc.

The women are now coming forward to support the programme. Mahila Mandals have been formed. The gem polishing community being a homogenous community, namely Muslim, has

been a contributory factor towards strengthening the unity and bonding the community of women.

The very fact that they have a common religion and read their scriptures makes them think deeply. Being a minority community who are now feeling insecure these mahila mandals have become a platform for the women to come together, make friendships and be united.

There is hope for the runaway boys, they can now look forward to a better future because they have learnt the skill of driving. Badshah used to be very dirty and was always having a drugged look. After getting his license there is marked change in his life style. He comes now neatly dressed, hair combed, face washed. He speaks more confidently. He is willing to express his opinion. He looks forward to having a better life. He no longer takes drugs. He is on the look out for a place to stay and for a job.

After one of street play programmes on HIV/AIDS parents said that they would send their children to the NFE center being run by the project. One girl after the programme organized for the children said that she would wear her clothes. She went back home and then returned neatly dressed. A great step towards health and wholeness. The people were willing to discuss their personal health concerns with us. And in the mobile clinic one patient with STD was identified.

The task is too big to handle and sometimes we feel that we are inadequate to meet this challenge. When children runaway from the shelter home and go back to the street we feel very sad. We want many children to be impacted but in reality only a few benefit from the interventions of the projects. The "missing children" are our disappointment.

We need to work harder and become more focused in our approach if we need to have a greater impact on our community. We need to spend more time with the community to understand them better.

We need to plan our programmes effectively which should emerge from the community itself. The project envisions a clean and healthy rag picker community. The project envisions that 655-targeted children will go to school and not be engaged in work.

