

TOWARDS ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR IN WASTEPICKING SECTOR THROUGH EDUCATION

A proposal by Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, New Delhi.

1. Name of the Project

Designing and implementing an appropriate education module pilot project to specially enable waste picking children to get an education in order to be break out of their hazardous profession.

1. Location

Delhi

2. Project Duration

One year

3. Details of the target group

The target group comprises children who work in the field of waste picking and who do not currently attend any formal education system. The children, between the ages of 8 yrs to 14 years, are often seen to be in the profession as they important contributors to the family earnings. It has also been seen that children work in order to enable their siblings to remain in school. Finally, it has been seen that many children of wastepickers undertake this occupation as their parents carry them along with them during work, inadvertently introducing them to the work. Many of them therefore do not have the time to actually attend regular schools in order to acquire an education. On the other hand, a survey by Chintan showed that many of them wish to be educated and move to cleaner and more dignified professions.

This is also now desirable by law, which discourages children under 14 to be engaged in hazardous activities, including waste-picking. In practical terms, this translates into the need for informal education for such children in order to enable them to move beyond waste picking.

However, conventional informal education does not always suit their specific needs, both in terms of information and knowledge and the support they require additionally from their teachers, coming as they do from a profession that is linked with pollution, low caste and marginal social status. Many children drop out even of informal education that does not take account of their specific contexts.

These children, both boys and girls, face a double disadvantage as they are particularly ostracized on account of their work. Interviews, studies and discussions with both the children and their communities shows that they are discouraged from joining municipal schools by the staff there as they do not wish to allow waste pickers on account of their perceived dirty profession.

Teachers in formal schools have also informally said that such children are a burden as they know very little for their age and can pollute the school atmosphere and spread disease, however clean they may appear. This is a sentiment that is echoed across various sections of Delhi society. This also ensures that they are further deprived of the right to education. Many other teaching centers also occasionally face this problem. For this unfortunate reason, children in this profession require particular attention.

Besides this, the children usually have no education and cannot even read the numbers on buses or the names of policemen who beat them. Hence, they remain marginalized on account of their illiteracy. Such children have also been found to suffer from particularly poor health. A Chintan study showed that 84% of the waste picker children studied suffered from anemia, 6% had handled the dreaded mercury and several complained of respiratory problems. In order to break this pattern of illness, children require skills and knowledge, which is greatly enhanced by even elementary education. For example, Chintan has undertaken several workshops on health with the children. We observed that those who have some education, or whose in-school siblings attended it, were able to take back more and use the information even later. For this reason, it is imperative that children receive education that is tailored to enhance their life skills, if we hope to phase them out of this profession to begin with.

In all this, the children are even more inclined not to study as the waste buyers, to whom they sell their daily pickings, actively discourage them from studying, as they may otherwise either stop selling waste at the current low prices or stop the work altogether, causing economic losses.

In all, there are approximately 30,000 such children in Delhi. The children Chintan wishes to work with live and are based out of areas around New Delhi including Sarojini Nagar,, Pillanji Village Area and Chanakyapuri (Vivekanand Camp and Sanjay Camp) region. It may seem ironic, but children here live in make shift jhuggis as they can access the waste from the affluent neighbourhood.

4. Detailed objectives

This project aims at strengthening a programme that is specially targeted at wastepicker children and meets their educational needs. The project seeks to use continue, strengthen and introduce new components in an existing initiative working with wastepicking children.

The detailed objectives of the project are

- To devise a practical means to enable waste picking children to phase out of this hazardous occupation by educating them adequately to pick up or formally acquire other skills.

It is clearly impossible for any child to learn alternative skills without some degree of basic education. This is a chicken and egg situation, where the child cannot make time to study and hence, cannot break out of a hazardous profession. The first objective is to design and implement a pilot informal education system with children wastepickers that is adequate to meet their needs at the grass roots level.

- To devise a means of imparting informal education to children who cannot stop work

Many programmes are not able to include waste picking children as they require an extraordinary degree of flexibility. This includes classes in the afternoon only, flexibility during peak work season and sensitivity to the demands of their waste buyers, who detain them for additional work. Hence, the objective will be to ensure that the classes are designed for the greatest flexibility to encourage rather than discourage children from attending and enable them not to drop out due to learning gaps.

- To devise a syllabus that optimizes the small window of time to maximize education and takes care of their immediate educational needs as well.

The project aims to create learning devices and pedagogical methods that enable the children to learn larger amounts through the small window of time that they make available for education, so that they are not at any significant disadvantage compared to children from other informal education systems. It also seeks to help them at once see for themselves that they are clearly learning, motivating them to return for classes.

- To offer children the opportunity to continue education nearby NDMC and MCD schools if they so choose.

It is expected that after the children see their own progress, some of them will wish to continue studying and be able to commit enough time for this. This project will enable the children to make the required links with various formal systems of education, such as the municipal schools, the National Open School etc.

- To enable children to build up life skills during the class room atmosphere.

Wastepickers need to build up strong life skills, be assertive and articulate and learn to negotiate with authorities, as the police and others most commonly pick them up. Instead of impinging upon their work time, we will build in life skills into the system of teaching and imparting education. Moreover, this is an essential requirement since it will be needed during their transition phase to formal education or safer jobs, as they will be constantly taunted for their origins.

5. Methodology for implementation

The methodology will be based on the premise that the project has to be finally implemented by many more persons in many wider areas of Delhi and beyond.

It will comprise the following components :

- Reshaping the curriculum

This will include reshaping the curriculum to make it different from a regular school curriculum and be able to be taught in a period of one year to eighteen months, in case of slow learners or children living under very difficult conditions. It will continue to focus to reading, writing , mathematics and life skills.

- Constant Training of the teachers

Chintan's teachers are familiar with both children and traditional kinds of teaching. However, they will require training as the training module is designed to reorientate the teachers and enable them to deliver the required support. This will be done through both workshops and actually supervising teaching practices and discussions day to day by the coordinator, who is a highly qualified pedagogue.

- Drawing in the Community

Many of the children we will reach out to live within and are knitted within communities, including parents, (where they exist), relatives, neighbors, elders and the waste buyers. This will be done through monthly meetings, orientation workshops with the

community and workshops to help monitor the children, discussions about the children's progress and the community's aspirations for children etc. The objective is to ensure proactive community support for the children's education. Bal Panchayats will also be held within the community.

- Links with Government

Of all the agencies, two, ie the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the Department of Education , Government of Delhi, are directly interested in the issue. The MCD has already expressed its interest in helping wastepicking children to get admission into its schools after they have had some education, so that they do not feel the need to drop out on account of being too old for their class.

6. Monitoring procedure

A simple monitoring procedure will be put into place as below:

- A profile of each child will be built up and updated, for sharing with the community and the others involved in the programme.
- Home visits will be undertaken to ensure children are encouraged to attend school regularly and factors stopping them are addressed to the maximum extent possible.
- The team will present its work to the rest of the chintan team on a monthly basis for their comments and additional inputs.
- The coordinator from Chintan will also monitor the project and be able to offer a quarterly update.
- An open discussion will take place with the children and the community twice a year to assess the project. The discussions will also be attended by an outside agency and be documented as part of the assessment.

7. Impact on Children

The impact of the beneficiaries will be clear and tangible, and will include the following :

- A clear leap in reading and writing skills.
- A clear increase in confidence and self assertion.
- A definite plan for each child's education will be created and ready for follow up.

- The children will have access to formal systems of education, such as MCD schools etc.
- Increased community support, including for girl wastepickers, to attend classes and the Chintan school instead of being cut off from home.

8. Budget (All Figures in Indian Rupees)

S.No	Item	Per Unit Cost	No. of Units	Time (months)	Total Requested	Chintan Contribution
a	Social Worker	7000	2	12	168000	
b	Teacher	5500	2	12	120000	
c	Books and Stationary	Lump Sum			30000	
d	Photocopies	Lump Sum			3000	
e	Mini Van/ Transport for children	7000	1	12	84000	
f	Teaching Aids				6000	
g	Transportation for Outreach	1800	1	12	21600	
h	Pediatrician once a week	700 per visit	10	12	35000	
i	Cost of Medicines and Tests	Lump Sum			18000	
j	Rentals to MCD for Community Centre	6500	1	12	78000	
k	Councilor once a fortnight	1000	1	12(24 weeks)	240000	
l	Project coordinator	10000	1	12	6000	6000
	TOTAL				809600	6000

Revised budget in another file