

A Better Childhood

Case Studies on

Child Labour

Theodora Lee
Research Support by
M.V. Foundation

Contents

Executive Summary		2
Part One	Introduction	
1	Objectives and Methodology of Report	4
2	Child Labour Issues in India	5
Part Two	8 Child Labour Case Studies	
3	Bakery Worker	8
4	Bamboo Juice Seller	11
5	Cloth Shop Worker	13
6	Fruit Seller	16
7	Goat Watcher	18
8	Marble Worker	21
9	Mechanic	23
10	Stone Worker	25
Part Three	Conclusion	
11	What is a Better Childhood?	28
Appendix	Drawings by Children	
	About the Author	

Executive Summary

This report is aimed at raising the awareness of child labour issues in India through the display of real child labour cases. Some insights are generated from the 8 interviews with children from different backgrounds, the report includes the life of children before and after they entered education in addition to the family's views on the importance of education.

Most of the child labourers have to work for very long hours with very low or no pay. These children cannot have fun and have no personal time for anything other than work. The worst thing is that they do not learn any skills in the end and thus the job does not give them a secure future or help them to improve the family's living standards. The children will just repeat the same path as their parents, they have to face the same difficulties and struggle every day.

School is not only a place for children to stay away from working, as it also allows them to learn, play, meet friends, do sports, develop values and morals. In addition, children will also receive care and support from teachers and peers, they can have a more well rounded life. Children can also explore a larger world via schooling, as they have the chance to see many new things. One of the mothers told us that school can also keep her children out of danger, because the environment in school is much better than that at work or at home. Children become the new hope of their family, they have a new path that differs from their parents and they gained new knowledge that can hopefully secure them both a job and a brighter future.

The parents I interviewed are not expecting their children to become an expert or a professional; they just want them to be a good person, meaning a person that does not do harm to the society. A simple wish that they believe education can make true.

We motivate children to go to school, but at the same time we must also give support and encouragement to their parents so that they are willing to send them to school instead of to work.

PART ONE

Introduction

1. Objectives and Methodology

1.1 Objectives

The main objective of this report is to generate pictures of the lives of child labourers and children in school and to gain insight from each case study, so as to understand the problems behind this social phenomenon and raise the awareness of child labour issues in India. In addition, this report also compares the changes in children after they entered education in order to study the importance of education for children and their families. Finally, it is hoped that joy may have been spread to the children through the time spent with them.

1.2 Methodology

8 students from different backgrounds, which are currently enrolled in the Neremet Residential Bridge Course Camp (RBC Camp) operated by MV Foundation, were selected as interviewees. They were asked the same set of questions and required to make some drawings. The questions and drawings were set to show a comprehensive picture of their family background, formal work experience and current school life. In addition, the parents of the children were also being interviewed and asked another set of questions that were designed to find out the family's views on education and changes in the children. A more thorough understanding of each child's family is made through the home visit.

2. Child Labour Issues in India

According to Indian's 2001 Census, Asia's child labour problem is led by India, which has 12.6 million working children from age 5 to 14, giving it the largest child workforce in the world. The India government has made some efforts to prohibit child labour; the 1986 Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulations) Act clearly stated that children under fourteen years of age could not be employed in hazardous occupations. However, this act does not protect the children in domestic work or other non-hazardous occupations. In addition, the definition of "helpers" is different from that of workers in Indian culture. Therefore, the children serving as helpers do not fall into the pool of child labour.

There are some 'popular' occupations for children, for example, construction, factory work, manual labour, shop assistants, domestic service, animal husbandry, tea stalls and hotels, family-run shops, garages and waste collection etc. There are not yet statistics on the allocation of these jobs which children work in India; according to ILO Bureau of Statistics 2000, around 70.4% of child labourers work in agriculture/fishing/hunting industry globally, followed by 8.3% of child labour in manufacturing and another 8.3% in wholesale and retail.

There are several causes of child labour known to the public. Poverty emerges as the most common reason because the household needs extra money so parents often send their children to work; tradition is also another cause, children are expected to follow in their parents' footsteps or are often asked to 'help' other family members, which is a very common practice in India. On the other hand, the demand for child labor is also driven by employers who prefer children because they are 'cheaper' than adults.

There are several concerns on the child labour issues. The first concern is about the future of the children. Most of them have to work very long hours and they receive very low or no pay. Work may provide them with technical skills and it can also provide income for their families. However, it cannot give them a happy childhood or security in the future. When they grow up, they have no new knowledge; they will be kept in the lower class and can only use their physical strength in exchange for money. A successful future is definitely not secured.

In addition, the work conditions and safety are very big potential hazards for the children; some of them are not well treated by the employers. It is often heard that the employers use force to have authority over the children. They are living in an environment of hate, fear and loneliness. The injuries are not only to their bodies; they also leave scars in their heart.

On the other hand, the child labour problem contributes to the illiteracy in India and creates more social problems in the long run; this will be a burden of the growth of this country and it will affect everyone – not only the child and his family, but also all the people in the society.

Child labour is seen in every corner of the street in India, they are everywhere, they are visible. It is a very complex socio-economic problem and it definitely will be a burden of the growth of India. There are many NGOs in India working together to abolish child labour, but without the full support from government, society and parents, it is a long way to go before success comes.

PART TWO

8 Case Studies

3. Bakery Worker

“I could only work everyday with nothing else to do. The job was easy.”

-- M. Nandu

Personal Details:

Name: Nandu Manpati

Age: 11

Area: Champapet, Hyderabad

Group: A



(Right) Nandu and his brother, Narveen

Family Background

M. Nandu and his family moved from place to place before they settled down in Champapet, Hyderabad in 2004. His family consists of 5 members, his parents and two younger brothers, ages 6 and 9, are also in the MV Foundation Camp. His mother works in a biscuit factory as a sweeper; she is the family income source. Tragically, Nandu's father died on Dec 4, 2004 due to a fire outbreak in the slum area they lived in.

Nandu's family now lives in a slum area called Singareni Colony. This is a very large area consisting of many small nylon huts; each of them is approximately 30 sq. feet in size. Everything is included in this small area: kitchen, sleeping and eating area etc. The heat and trash create an environment for rats and insects, for example, flies, to thrive in. The hygiene is very poor and they have to use public water.

The Story of Nandu

When his family first settled in Champapet, he went to school for 2 months. But after his father died in the fire he had to quit school in order to take care of his brothers. A bakery shop owner went to his mother and asked if she would like to send him to work. Nandu started working after he and his mother both agreed on it. He worked from 10am to 11pm and his duties

included selling the food, serving the customers and cleaning up the shop. With such long working hours, he could earn Rs600 a month, which is around Rs20 a day. The work environment was not bad for him, he stayed indoors all day and there was a fan. He was being treated well and his mother sent him lunch everyday.

He stated that the work was easy though no special skills were learned. The bad thing about the work is that he could not do anything else other than work, he had to stay in the shop for the whole day and he returned home late every night. Later, his mother made him stop working and asked him to stay home and take care of his brothers.

One day, a MV Foundation Volunteer came to his house and asked if his mother would send Nandu and his brothers to the camp operated by the MV Foundation. She agreed to send them to the camp, he has been there for 3 months.

The first thing he liked about the camp was that there were no flies present. MV Foundation gives him a better environment to grow up. Nandu enjoys his life in the camp as he can have education here and does not have to go to work. He especially loves the atmosphere, with lots of friends playing, studying and living together. His favorite games are cricket and volleyball.

Finally, he would like to be a policeman in the future because he thinks this job is meaningful.

Interview with his mother

His mother is very thankful to the MV Foundation, as it gives a hope to her and her children for a better future. She decided to send all of her children to camp because she does not want them to live in such an unhealthy environment; she is scared that something bad might happen to them as it did to her husband. She wants them to be good people, finish college and get a job. She found that Nandu has improved his knowledge, he can read and write Telugu, his English is good, and all the tiny changes she found in him are very heart-warming.

Insights from Nandu

As he described the work, the good thing was the Rs600 paid by his employer. But he could not learn anything from the work and there was no time at all for him to relax or hang around with friends. The job would not benefit him in the future if he kept working in the bakery. It is very likely that the salary would not be increased much and he would learn nothing in the end. Even though the work conditions are safe, when they are not potentially hazardous to the children and even when the job itself is not harsh, it does not help to develop a child's potential.

Nandu could not learn anything that could give him a better future. On the other hand, every child needs to share his childhood with a group of peers, which they can share, play and learn. If he grows up in a world of adults with limited activities, he could not explore a new world and surely there would not be any 'fun' in his childhood.

From his mother's point of view, school not only provides education for the children, but also a safe and secure environment for them to live in. As they are from an area of very poor conditions; the camp can keep away the dangers from her children. This is the best way she could protect them.

4. Bamboo Juice Seller

“I can now play, sing and learn! No work in the camp!!”

– R. Nagesh

Personal Details:

Name: Nagesh Ramaiah Shanthama

Age: 12

Area: Addagutta, Secunderabad

Group: A



Family Background

R. Nagesh's family business is bamboo juice selling. All the seven members of the family, Nagesh's parents, two sisters, ages 14 and 16, one married brother and his wife, are involved in this business. Nagesh and his second sister are now going to school, but his eldest sister is helping out the family.

His family has had to move to different places so they could have more customers. Right now they are living in Addagutta, one of the largest slum areas in Secunderabad. The area is well organized with electricity, but they have to use the public water for daily use.

The Story of Nagesh

Before joining the camp, Nagesh had never studied in school. All his family members were required to work together. None of them were paid because the income is made for the whole household. Together they earn proximately Rs100 a day. Nagesh used to work from 6.30am to 5pm every day. He had to purchase the bamboo from the market, prepare it, spin and serve the customers. His family also used the used bamboo to make some products, for example, the *chata*, for sale. They worked in an open area, where the environment was not good. As he described,

the water was not clean and there were many mosquitoes.

When Hariya, a M.V. Foundation Volunteer, was doing a door-to-door survey in Addagutta he reached Nagesh's family. Surprisingly, without any special negotiations, his father agreed to send Nagesh to the camp operated by M.V. Foundation. Nagesh joined the camp on Feb 8, 2005. He loves the camp because there is a regular timetable and there is no work required here. What he treasures the most is the atmosphere in the camp, where he has a group of peers to live with and where the environment is better than that at home.

Interview with Nagesh's family

Nagesh is the only child in his family currently being sent to school. When Hariya found Nagesh's family, his father decided to send him to school right away. He made such a quick decision because he wanted one of his children to have a better future. His whole family had been working together for years and he knew that Nagesh would have to keep on working with the family if he did not go to school. Nagesh studies well in the camp and he is a very friendly child. They want him to have a brighter future.

Insights from Nagesh

Nagesh is the only hope of the family as he has taken a path that is different from other family members. They believe that education can make a difference in their lives. If they did not make this decision, the next generation would just repeat the life of the previous generation; they would have to face the same difficulties and struggle every day. We should give the next generation a chance to choose their future and let them have a better life. When Nagesh was working with the whole family, they were very close to each other but it also limited the social circle of Nagesh. He did not have a chance to meet new friends, gain knowledge and explore a new world. It limited his potential.

5. Cloth Shop Worker

"I now have the confidence to go to school again!"

-- Y. Vikram

Personal Details:

Name: Vikram Yanka

Age: 14

Area: Addagutta, Secunderabad

Group: A



Family Background

Vikram has two elder brothers, ages 18 and 21; they both have attended the government school before and completed 8th and 10th class, now they are working with their father as a wall painter. His mother works in the school as a maid.

They live in a better section of Addagutta, their house is very neat with two bedrooms, one living room and kitchen. They have a good living environment with electricity, water, a fan and a television.

The Story of Vikram

Prior to coming to the MV Foundation camp, Vikram was in school for 6 years and completed the 6th class. He eventually dropped out of school because the other children did not get along with him as he has problems with his legs due to having polio at a young age.

Then he found himself a job in a cloth shop, he was responsible for the packaging and sticking the labels. He worked from 10am to 11pm; sometimes he would also pick up an extra night shift, which lasted until 2am during the peak season. From his work, he received Rs500 a month and he gave the whole sum to his mother.

Manimala is the M.V. Foundation Volunteer who reached Vikram's family doing the door-to-door survey, she discussed with Vikram's family and they decided to motivate Vikram to go to school again. With the support and encouragement from his brother, who is a former M.V. Foundation student, Vikram promised to go to the camp and quit the job that he had been working for one year.

He did not want to attend the government school again because he felt shame as a former dropout. In addition, the previous experiences of teasing by the other children made him hesitate to go back. Luckily he enjoys himself a lot in the camp; here, he has a life. He finds that the teachers in this camp are more caring and interested in teaching than the teachers in the government school. They give him confidence, he put aside the previous bad experience and is now ready to go back to school and attend higher class.

Telugu and Social Science are Vikram's favorite subjects and Parrasuram is his favorite teacher; he gets along with the children in the camp very well, and they encourage his talents in drawing, playing Tabla and cricket. Now he teaches others how to play Tabla and cricket and from this he has gained self-confidence.

Interview with Vikram's Family

His family is very open-minded, Vikram's parents understand the importance of education and they have decided to send all of their children to school. Even when Vikram dropped out from school and decided to work, they allowed him to do so because they want him make his own decision in life. They found that he has changed in several ways after joining the camp. For example, Vikram can now read all Telugu characters and he is more proactive to read the newspaper. They are really glad that Vikram has the motivation to learn and go to school. Finally, his family wishes him good health, good education and a better job in the future.

Insights from Vikram

Vikram chose to work, he was not being forced to into child labour. He did not have any complaints about the job, but when he experienced the school life again he realized that school is definitely a better place for him while he grows up. When a child has to quit the job and start school again, family support is very important. He is very lucky that his family and the M.V. Foundation volunteers all worked together to motivate him. Now he has a second chance. If no one cares about the school dropout child, they may never have a second chance to experience school life and replace the past bad memory with the new one. In addition, the camp gives him a

place to find his talents and develop self-confidence. He was being discriminated against because of his legs, but with the care and support from teachers and other children, he does not care anymore.

School is not only a place to learn, but also a place for children to develop themselves. Even though it was Vikram himself who chose to work, he told us education is definitely a better choice.

No place is better than school.

6. Fruit Seller

“The teachers sleep, eat and play together with us, it’s like a home!”

-- San Jeer Kumar

Personal Details:

Name: San Jeer Kumar

Age: 11

Area: Sithapalmandi, Secunderabad

Group: C



(Right) San Jeer Kumar and San Kumar

Family Background

San Jeer Kumar and his brother, San Kumar, are both in the MV Foundation camp. His elder sister, age 13, is now in government school. His mother sells flowers in the market, his father died 2 years ago. There is a very strong bond between all of his family members.

They live with their uncle’s family in a house that has all the basic facilities.

The Story of San Jeer Kumar

San Jeer Kumar was admitted into a government school for one year, but he did not go to school too often and finally dropped out. He then stayed home and helped with some domestic work and played with other children on the street. When his father died 2 years ago, he had new duties. At 8 every morning, he had to go to the market with his mother, so his sister stayed home to do domestic work and take care of their youngest brother. His mother sold the flowers and he sold fruits. They needed to purchase the fruit from another market near their home and travelled to a very busy market for the business. They sat next to each other on the street with the flowers and fruits in front of them. They travelled back and forth between home and different markets

everyday. They usually returned home at 10pm every night. He said the job was very harsh and tiring because they have to work under the sun on the street. One day, Lasemi, a volunteer of M.V. Foundation came to the market and asked his mother to send him to the camp. His mother agreed because her children could receive education and live in the camp for free. He has been at camp for three months already.

San Jeer Kumar loves the camp very much because he can receive a good education, meet friends, have food and play games like cricket. His favorite teacher is Sami, who stays with him in the same room; they also play and eat together. Sami also lends his mobile to San Jeer Kumar so that he can talk with his mother. The caring teachers in the camp give him love and let him have an opportunity to enjoy life.

Interview with San Jeer Kumar's mother

His mother sent the two brothers to the camp and she was very impressed by the teachers who can tell the name of each family. She also finds that the children are very happy in the camp all the time. She told us that San Jeer Kumar met some bad friends in school before. He was developing some bad habits. For example, he hit other children and he did not know any Telugu letters. But after attending the camp for three months, San Jeer Kumar has changed his bad behaviors and can now read. She is very happy with the education received by San Jeer Kumar and San Kumar here. She hopes that after joining the M.V. Foundation camp, they can go to the government hostel and receive a better education. Finally, she also wishes that San Jeer Kumar could have a brighter future with the help of the knowledge he received and get a job in the town.

Insights from San Jeer Kumar

San Jeer Kumar's father died two years ago, he misses him a lot but he is living happily in the camp. It is because of the love and support that he receives in the camp that he is able to start a new life. San Jeer Kumar's mother adores her children so much, but the reality forced her to send them to work. When a volunteer came to her and told her more about the camp, she knew this was the chance to send them to school again. If a child has dropped out of school and no one speaks to him face to face and persuades him, it is very unlikely that he would go to school again. We all need encouragement to do something and this is especially true when we want a child to stop working and start going to school.

If a child works with his family, he does not have to leave them, but it will stop him from being together with his peers. A healthy childhood not only needs time spent with family, but also with peers. Childhood is not complete when a child works, because it takes over every part of their life and everything else would be excluded.

7. Goat Watcher

“The long hours working under the sun gave me headache and eye problems”

– G. Mahesh

Personal Details:

Name: Mahesh Gadda

Age: 14

Area: Gachibowli

Group: A



(Right) Mahesh, his brother and the Buffaloes

Family Background

Mahesh's family is in the business of raising buffaloes and goats. He has three brothers, ages 11, 18 and 21. His eldest brother is an electrician working in the town, Mahesh and the other brother used to help their father with buffaloes and goats, while his mother would stay home as a housewife. At present, he and the youngest brother go to school, so only their second brother is helping their father.

The whole family lives together with their uncle's family. Their house has electricity and water, and it is clean and tidy with no furniture. There is a kitchen, a living room and several bedrooms. The buffaloes and goats are kept under a roof near the house.

The Story of Mahesh

Mahesh went to school until 6th class before, but then fell into the wrong crowd, stopped going to school regularly and slowly lost interest in school. Since then, he has been helping his father watch the goats while his brother was responsible for the buffaloes. There were 17 goats and he had to walk them to a field for grazing about 1 km away from his house. He had to stay

there with the goats for the whole day, from 10am to 6pm. There was not much to do, he just had to watch them closely and make sure they did not run away. Sometimes he also had to milk the goats at home. They earned money from selling the goats and their products, such as milk. Once Mahesh seriously injured his head when he fell on a rock while he was watching the goats. He still has a scar. He also still has bad headaches and suffers from eye irritation from watching the goats, all a result of staying under the sun and in heat for the whole day. Mahesh did not like the job too much, as it was too hot and the hours were too long for him.

Anitha, a MV Foundation Volunteer, lives very close to Mahesh's house; she knew about Mahesh and his past experience in school. She decided to help Mahesh's mother motivate him to go to school again. Mahesh finally agreed to join MV Foundation Camp and now he has been there for 4 months.

His favourite class in the camp is Telugu and he has also learned a little bit of English. He likes the camp and Sami, his favourite teacher who is a very nice and friendly person. All the lessons, games, songs, atmosphere and friendship in the camp bring him lots of happiness. Mahesh would like to be a doctor in the future so that he could give free medications to poor people.

Interview with Mahesh's family

His parents told us they have a very good experience with MV Foundation. They think that MV Foundation creates a very good environment for students and takes good care of their children. Most importantly, the teachers in the camp care about the children and motivate them to go to school.

Mahesh's parents are both uneducated and know little about education, but they believe that an education can help Mahesh develop positive attitude and good values. After Mahesh spent four months in the camp, his parents observed some changes in him. For example, he used to spend his free time with the "wrong crowd" and beat up other children; now, he is changed. He does not behave that way anymore. In addition, he adopted some new habits. He has better hygiene, pays more attention to his appearance and reads books.

Nothing makes parents more happy than seeing positive changes in their children. Mahesh's parents do not have great expectations for him, they just hope that Mahesh can grow up happily and go to college. As for the rest of the things, they will let God decide.

Insights from Mahesh

Mahesh is like many of the children who have to help out in the family business and do whatever their parents ask them to do. Parents love their children a lot, however, if they keep their children on the same track as they are on, then the children will just fall into the same situation. They will be able to make a living but they will not step out of the poverty. It is essential that someone let the parents know there is another way. This could help the next generation have a better life.

Mahesh's work did not have any obvious dangers and he did not have to handle any hazardous materials. But does it mean that his health was not in danger? His experience shows that the answer is definitely "No". He had health problems not because of any single incident that occurred in his work, but because the long and continuous work made him suffer. Whenever a child works, his health and life are both in danger.

8. Marble Worker

“I had an electric shock when I was carrying the water...it was terrible...”

– K. Shiva

Personal Details:

Name: Shiva Kumar

Age: 12

Area: Addagutta, Secunderabad

Group: B



(Right) Narsimha and Shiva

Family Background

Shiva lives with his grandparents because his parents and younger sister are living in Mumbai. Shiva and his younger brother, Brasea, have both been admitted to the MV Foundation camp. His father works in a cloth shop in Mumbai and his mother is a housewife and his sister goes to school in Mumbai. They usually come back to Hyderabad once every five months.

In Hyderabad, Shiva and his grandparents stay in the Addagutta area. They have electricity but the house is very small, it is only one room, 100 sq. feet, where they cook, sleep and eat.

The Story of Shiva

Shiva went to school for two years but he quit when his grandparents sent him to work. He was employed as a marble worker for five months. He had to polish and clean the marbles so that they had smoother edges. He worked from 10am to 8pm everyday and earned Rs20 per day, his grandparents kept Rs15 and he kept only Rs5. His grandma bought him lunch everyday and he was treated well at work. He worked at a construction site under a roof. He never hurt himself while polishing the marbles, but once he did get electrocuted while carrying a bucket of

water.

When Shiva's parents returned from Mumbai, they found out that Shiva was working without their permission. They told his grandparents that he should not work and thus he quit his job. In the meantime, MV Foundation volunteer talked to Shiva about the benefits of going to school and so Shiva and his brother became interested in the Narmet camp. With no objections from his grandparents, they joined the camp on Feb 12, 2005.

In the camp, Shiva has learned many words and sentence formations in Hindi, Telugu, and English. He likes the camp very much, as he can play, sing songs, enjoy the food and learn. When he was working, life was composed solely of work. He was not able to go out and visit other places. Now, he can meet new friends and learn at school. At camp, he especially loves the fruits and biscuits he receives because he has never had them before.

Today, he really enjoys his life at the camp, because of his kind teachers and friends who are very caring and supportive. In the future he dreams of becoming a cricket player.

Interview with Shiva's family

Shiva's parents did not know anything about his work, so they were surprised when they found out about it. His parents were not educated, but they would like their children to have an education where they can learn to read, then go to college and find a secure job. They have no unrealistic expectations, they just hope all their children can grow up happily.

Insights from Shiva

School not only provides education to the children, but also gives them a better environment in which to grow up. When children are from very poor families, they might not even have a chance to draw, eat snacks and go anywhere apart from their homes. Shiva has never travelled before, but he is able to visit new places when he is a part of the camp. School gives him a chance to explore the larger world.

When he worked, he worked very hard, but in return he only had Rs5 in his pocket. It is obvious that it is not fair when a child has to use all his strengths and sacrifice his future in exchange for such a small amount of money. We want the best for the future of the children and it is evident that the workplace is not the best alternative for them.

9. Mechanic

“One day, there was no rice in the pot, my mum sent me to work.”

-- K. Narsimha

Personal Details:

Name: Narsimha Koduru

Age: 10

Area: Addagutta, Secunderabad

Group: D



(Right) Narsimha and Shiva

Family Background

Narsimha's father makes carpets and his mother is a domestic worker. Narsimha has two younger brothers, ages 4 and 7, and both of them are staying at home. He is a cousin of K. Shiva (Chapter 8). They live next to each other in Addagutta area.

Their house is around 100 sq. feet in area and they have electricity, but it gets very crowded when the whole family is at home. They get water from a public tube well.

The Story of Narsimha

Narsimha had never been to school before coming to the camp. He used to stay at home and look after his younger brothers. His work life began when there was no rice at home one day. He was sent to work at a mechanic shop. With his small hands, he had to fix bikes using screwdrivers and pump the tires. The shop was just a small stall in the street with no cover or roof, so he worked in open air where there were many mosquitoes. Every day, he needed to work from 9am to 10pm to earn Rs.15. He did not enjoy working because he could not go to school and the conditions were not good at work, the heat was too strong and he was bitten by

mosquitoes.

When a MV Foundation volunteer found Narsimha at his workplace, he explained to him the benefits of schooling and came home with him. Narsimha's parents agreed to send him to the camp and he has now been at the camp for 2 months.

He finds that there are many differences between work and school. First, he had no friends at work and was usually bored. Secondly, the mosquitoes and insects bothered him a lot and their bites left scars on his face. The environment at the camp is much better than at the shop, he now does not have to stay in open air all day. Finally, he can now play games, sing songs, read and even take a nap during the day at the camp; before, there was only hard work.

He loves schooling and drawing, but his family could not buy him pencils or paints colors, so he could not draw or write before. With the materials provided by the camp, he always draws and imagines new things. Parrashuram is his favourite teacher who always supports and encourages him. Telugu and mathematics are his favourite subjects at the camp.

Interview with Narsimha's family

His family is happy that Narsimha can now go to school and they plan to send him to government school after he finishes the camp. His parents are both uneducated and they do not know what a good education is, but they believe that schooling can turn Narsimha into a good person with good values and morals, as he will be able to have good company, study in a good atmosphere and be looked after by the teachers. They hope that Narsimha will be able to go to school and find a job at the end.

Insights from Narsimha

His mother sent him to work because of financial difficulties in the family. This is often the main reason why parents send their children to work. If no one else helps the parents, there will always be children being sent to work. To be able to attend the school full time, children must have the support of their families. Their families also need emotional and financial support to be motivated to send their children to school instead of work.

Narsimha says he loves the camp because the timetable is well organized and he has time for a nap; he could not have a rest when he worked. This demonstrates that the work could never fit a child's lifestyle. Work is for adults; it does not consider children's needs. But school is designed for children, it is there to help them to grow, learn and accommodate their needs. Adult jobs never suit a child.

10. Stone Worker

“The stones were very big but I moved them.”

-- N. Sudhaker

Personal Details:

Name: Sudhaker NagaraJu

Age: 9

Area: Gowlidoddi

Group: B



(Right) Narsimha and Sudhaker

Family Background

Sudhaker's family has eight members. His mother and sister died and thus the eldest sister, age 13, has to take care of the whole family and do all of the domestic work. His eldest brother, who is 14, is working together with their father as a stone worker. Sudhaker and another brother, Narsimha, were both working with their father as well, but now they are in the camp.

They live in Gowlidoddi area, which is very far away from the city. Their house is very simple and they have to get water from the public tube.

The Story of Sudhaker

Sudhaker has never been to school before, but he went to work with his father and brothers for 4 months. As shown in his drawing, they worked together to cut, carry and move the stone onto the lorries. They brought their lunch, which was prepared by his sister, to work and they stayed from 8am to 5pm. Sudhaker mainly carried stones, and he still has scars on his feet from dropping them. All of the children worked together to help their father, so they were not able to get paid extra. Sudhaker described the work as very harsh, since they had to work very long

hours under the sun and use a lot of physical strength.

A MV Foundation volunteer came to their workplace, and after a lot of persuasion convinced his father to send Sudhaker and one of his younger sons to go to the camp. They have now been at the camp for three months. Sudhaker likes to play games and read at the camp, and Parrasuram is his favourite teacher who is very nice to all of the children.

When Sudhaker is older, he would like to become a doctor to help the poor.

Interview with Sudhaker's family

The family is very happy that Sudhaker and his brother were able to go to school because it gives them hope for the future. The eldest son still has to help his father at work. The family also needs a person to do the housework and unfortunately because their mother died, the only daughter has to stay home and fulfill that role. It has been a very hard time for the family as they have lost two members in such a short period of time. In the future, Sudhaker and his brother can both go to college and get a good job to support their family.

Insights from Sudhaker

Many misfortunes have happened to this family and the father had no choice but to ask all the children to work or stay at home. Sudhaker's family has been faced with many difficult situations and decisions. With positive encouragements and help, parents are able to become more confident and insist on sending their children to school instead of work.

When children have to work in hard jobs, they use a lot of physical effort. They are overworked as rest is never given. When they are young, they are capable of doing those jobs, but as they get older, their bodies deteriorate faster and are no longer capable of those physically demanding jobs. When young children are not given the opportunity to learn any skills, where does it leave them when they are no longer capable of the physical labour?

PART THREE

Conclusion

11. What Is A Better Childhood?

Poverty is not inevitable. One should have the chance to make life better. Knowledge can improve life.

Money can make you live in luxury, it can help life become better and easier. But it does not mean that poor people lack happiness. From the experience in the camp, children can all live happily not because of toys or luxuries they received; but because of the people in the camp who stay with them. They all have fun singing, dancing, playing cricket, drawing, learning etc.—these are all inexpensive activities, but children have so much fun here! Their experiences in work and in school prove that the latter is better. This is because work is for adults and school is designed for children. Work does not meet any needs of the growth of children, they could not have opportunities to develop their potentials. On the contrary, school broadens their horizons and gives them a chance to choose their future path.

A childhood serves as a gate to the future, so a better childhood not only includes a happy life, but also gives them a better future. If children keep working with their parents, they will not develop any skills and they could only repeat the same path as the previous generations. They could not improve their lives and dreaming is a luxury they cannot afford.

Poverty, unemployment/under-employment and illiteracy, are the most important factors that contribute to child labour. However, if children work, they cannot help their families to step out from poverty; there are not enough jobs for adults, children could not go to school and therefore they are illiterate still. The problems are still unsolved. Given the complex socio-economic dimensions of the problem, improvement in the living and working conditions of parents and in their economic conditions is crucial to the elimination of child labour. If conditions improve, then parents will have the motivation to send children to school instead of work.

Children going to school are the best for them and also the best for parents, as it is the option that could give them a better future.

Appendix

Appendix – Drawings by Children



Nandu likes to play, eat
and read in the camp.

Drawing 1 – Nandu in Camp



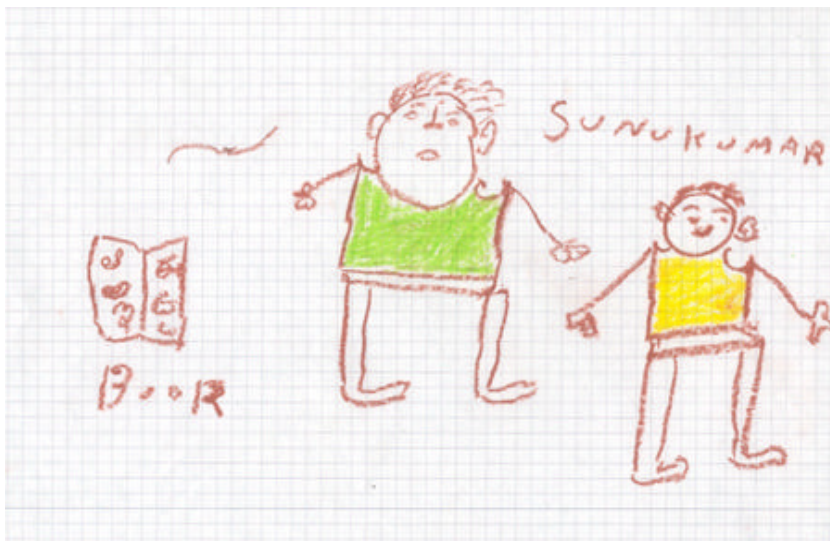
At camp, children play games and read
together.

Drawing 2 – Nagesh in the camp

Vikram likes to play cricket, read and
eat in the camp.



Drawing 3 – Vikram in the camp



San Jeer Kumar and
friend.

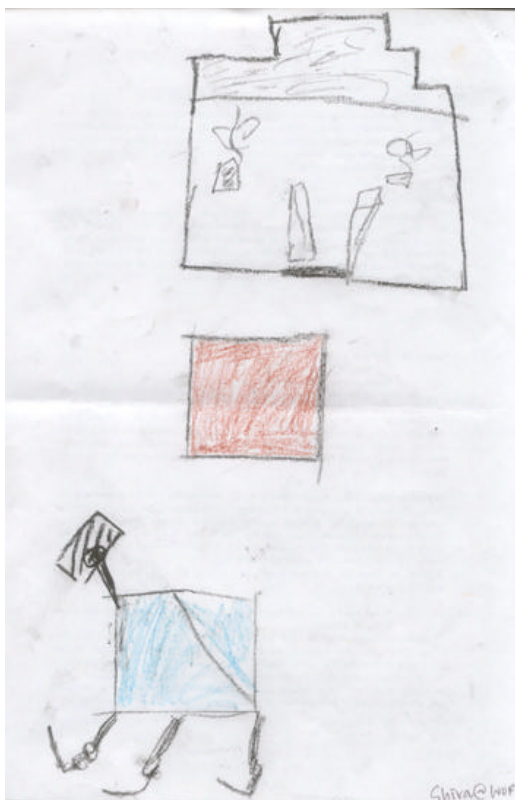
Drawing 4 – San Jeer Kumar in the camp

Mahesh and the goats. The picture is of the goats grazing by the river.

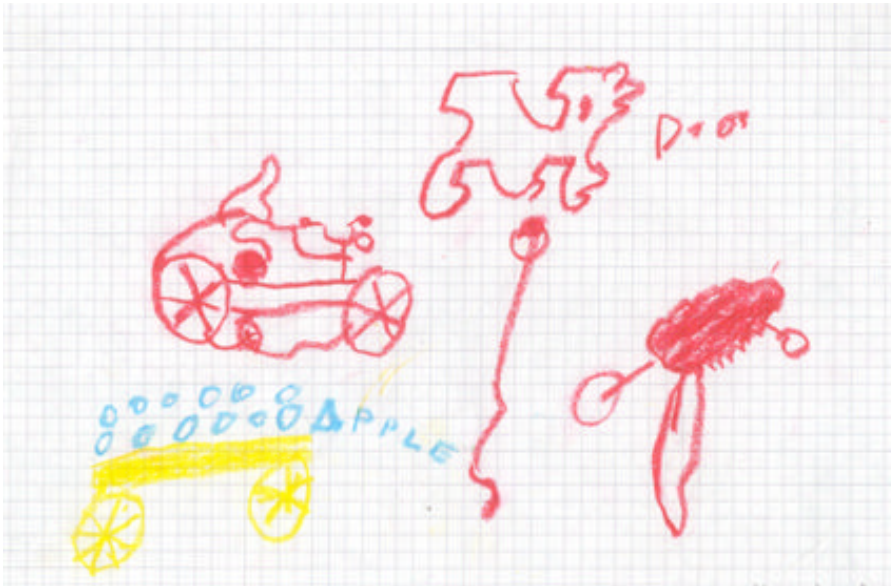


Drawing 5 – Mahesh at work

Shiva worked in a construction site where he polished the marbles.



Drawing 6 – Shiva at work



Drawing 7 – Narsimhs at work

Narsimhs used a pump and a screwdriver to fix bicycles. There was a stall selling apples and a dog near his work place.



Drawing 8 – Sudhaker at work

Sudhaker and his family moved the stones onto the lorry.

Appendix – About the Author

Theodora is a graduate from the Chinese University of Hong Kong where she majored in accounting. She is a business student but also has much experience in social services having been involved in voluntary services since 1994. It is her desire to serve people throughout the world, not only in Hong Kong. Thus, she decided to do an internship in India in her last summer vacation.

Theodora is passionate about serving children. She believes if a child experiences a happy childhood, they will grow up to care about other people in their society thus creating a harmonic world with no hate, only peace.