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INCLUSION

Oasis India's monthly e-newsletter

October 2018



Hi Communication,

United Nation's International Day of the Girl Child is celebrated annually on 11th October. The main aims of the day are to promote girls' empowerment and their human rights while also highlighting the challenges that girls all over the world face.

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD?

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children – that India ratified in 1992 – all children are born with fundamental rights.

- Right to Survival – to life, health, nutrition, name, nationality
- Right to Development – to education, care, leisure, recreation, cultural activities
- Right to Protection – from exploitation, abuse, neglect
- Right to Participation – to expression, information, thought, religion

When we celebrate International Day of the Girl Child, we consent to fight for girls'

KANNAGI NAGAR - A LONG ROAD TOWARDS CHANGE



"I am scared of the people that live here. My child is not safe so I have sent her to live with her grandparents. She is safe there and will get a good education", says Kalai, a young mother of two at Kannagi Nagar.

As one of the largest re-settlement areas in the country, Kannagi Nagar is allegedly the hotspot for crimes in Chennai. According to a report called 'Forced to the Fringes: Disasters of Resettlements in India' by the Information and Resource Centre for the Deprived Urban Communities (IRCDUC) and Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), 60% of residents now living in Kannagi Nagar were evicted from their city homes without any legal notices. Now these 21,000 households live in uninhabitable sites and in the process lack basic facilities like education and health.

The most affected are children.

Only 9% of the total children in Kannagi Nagar go to school.

According to the report, 38% of the evictions and relocations were in the middle of the school year. So children travelled long distances in buses to go to schools that they studied in before the relocation. Many dropped out as a result, and are prone to crimes like theft, drugs or substance abuse.

In such a place of high risk, girls struggle to find a voice.

Girls are often sent away to live with relatives in safer neighborhoods in the city. And a large

At an age where they should think they can achieve anything, girls at Kannagi are instead finding ways to fend for their family.

Divya Tajan, our Project Coordinator at Kannagi Nagar has been on the forefront of establishing our new hub at Ezhil Nagar (near Kannagi Nagar). She says a story stuck with her and is her motivation to contribute to the change there. "This 10-year-old, Jenifer told me she wants to become a doctor. Why? She lost her mother to tuberculosis due to no proper healthcare facility close by. Jenifer wants to give free treatment for tuberculosis patients when she becomes a doctor."

An alcoholic and abusive father. A poverty-stricken home. No school. Jennifer has big dreams but to pursue that she needs support from her parents and the society. Does she receive it? No.

Where do we begin to help girl children pursue their dreams?

At Oasis, we aim to reintegrate children back in schools and provide holistic education which will help them tackle struggles in life head on. Girl children like Jenifer can find a safe space to dream and pursue that dream irrespective of where they are from. Awareness about the importance of education is the first step towards this. Divya says, "My wish is for them to go after their dreams, achieve it and return to transform the sad reality of Kannagi Nagar."

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mother, a sex-worker and a drug dealer, picks up young girls and forces them to marry older men for commission. Rekha stayed away from her mother who tried to force her as well. Imagine not feeling safe and secure around your own mother – but Rekha pushed through that too!

As soon as she completed her 12th grade, she moved into an apartment with the help of a friend. Right when she hoped that this was the start of something new, adversity struck again. The owner of the apartment, an alcoholic, began torturing her for money. Realising that she was at risk, one of her friends – who was part of our vocational tailoring programme – reached out to Rekha.

This is when we stepped in and gave Rekha a safe shelter at Nirmal Bhavan, a rehabilitation center for women from high-risk areas in Mumbai. She received counselling to overcome the trauma that she had been subjected to since her young age. It has helped her open up and look beyond to a better future. She is also part of the literacy classes at Nirmal Bhavan where she learns English. Her dream is to learn Karate and communicate fluently in English. Rekha's desire to achieve is contagious. We hope that we will equip and empower her enough to step into the world fearlessly again one day.

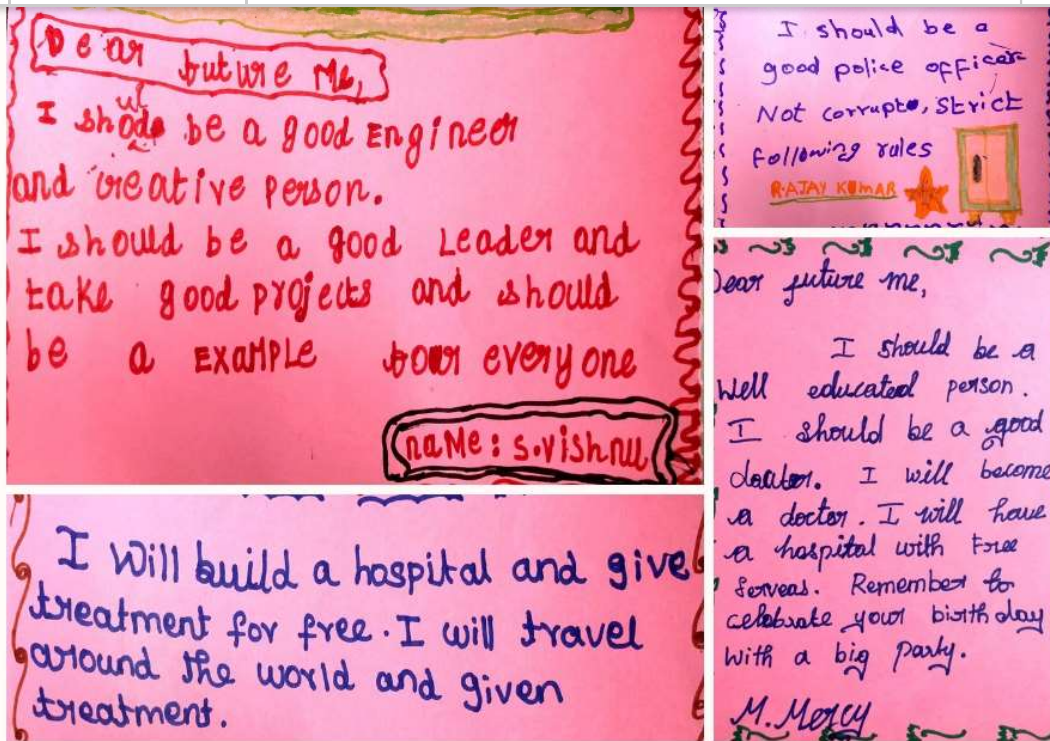
*name changed

We asked our little friends at the after-school programme in Chennai to write to their future self. Take a look!

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D E A R F U T U R E M E

A TEACHER IN THE MAKING



Her name is Gopi*. She studies in 7th grade and lives in Kamathipura, Mumbai. She has been with Oasis for the past six years and looking back, we are amazed at how far she has come. Initially, when our staff started working with her, Gopi was very quiet and timid. Her behaviour was a major reflection of what she experienced at home.

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providing counselling and guidance at our day-care center. She is also part of our after-school programme (ASP) where our tutors help her overcome her attention deficiency.

Gopi calls Oasis India her second home. She visits our day-care centre and loves spending time with our staff. Her passion is to teach and she dreams of becoming a teacher someday. Gopi takes inspiration from the tutors at ASP who never gave up on her. She wishes to do the same for others like her.

*name changed

YOU ARE IMPORTANT



In Krishnarajapuram (KRP) in Bangalore, majority of the slum dwellers are sanitation workers who have migrated from various parts of the country. From our initial survey at KRP, we found that they struggle with extreme poverty and survive on a bare minimum salary.

With parents barely at home, and thus unable to take care of their children, young boys and girls are left to be by themselves after school. **Girls lack guidance in self-grooming and care, and even 10-year-olds have no basic education.** They are also emotionally unstable as they are verbally abused at home or on the streets. Deprived of love and care, they are robbed of a healthy and holistic growth.

Girls are given an opportunity to be a part of the holistic education that we offer in our after-school programme (ASP). We teach them etiquette, health and hygiene, self-grooming and self-care. They now know about trafficking, child rights and education, enough to make sure they do not fall to anyone tricking them into evil ways.

Recently, an 11-year-old girl who had dropped out of school to take care of her niece at home started attending our ASP and showed great interest in studying. In fact, on the first day she watched the children studying and longed to hold a book and a pencil. We are working with her family to reintegrate her back into a school.

Every child has a thirst to learn. So does a girl child. It is our responsibility to make sure they receive that **education, love and support** needed to fulfill that.

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- Being home to more than one third of the 10 million child brides in the world, India has one of the highest numbers of girls forced into marriage before the legal age of 18.
 - One in every three child brides in the world is from India.
 - India has more than 45 lakh girls under 15 years of age who are married with children. Out of these, 70% of the girls have 2 children.
 - One in every two girls in India is malnourished.
 - Out of the 12 million girls born in India, one million die before they turn one.
 - One out of six girls dies due to gender discrimination.
 - One out of every 10 women report instances of child sexual abuse

Sources: saveagirlchild.org, cry.org, UNICEF, Census 2011, CSA

THREE MAJOR ISSUES GIRL CHILDREN FACE IN THE SLUMS



It is hard to imagine that discrimination against girl children exists at an age when women have been proving themselves in every area. From astronomy to business, women are excelling, but discrimination is a strong reality that prevails today.

In the slums we work in, gender discrimination is an unspoken actuality. The three major issues are:

Sexual abuse

Children in the community and especially children in Mumbai's red-light areas vulnerable to sexual abuse. Pimps are always on the look-out for young girls, and therefore sex workers in Kamathipura and Grant Road often send their children to our day-care center and night shelter where they are safe from the dangers of trafficking.

Education

Gender bias is very prevalent. Boys are sent to school while girls are made to take care of household work. We create awareness in the community on the importance of education and stress on breaking the gender bias that exists – that irrespective of the gender, every child has the right to education. Our after-school classes encourage boys and girls equally to be the best academically and in life.

Child marriage

Once a girl attains puberty, she becomes a prospect for marriage. The legal age for marriage in India is 18 for girls and 21 for boys. Not abiding by this law is punishable. But that does not stop rampant occurrences across the country. To curb this, we visit the homes of those in our various programmes, imparting awareness and knowledge on the issue.

Even though these issues are prevalent, change is possible. When the community is sensitised, change becomes inevitable.

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Why don't you take a minute today to celebrate your mother, sister, daughter or wife by giving them this 'you are priceless' card.

Change starts at home.

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Our mailing address is:

Bangalore: No 201, Amazing Grace, 2nd Floor, 3rd 'D' Main, Ramaiah Layout, Opp. BBMP Kuvempu Park,
Kacharakanahalli, Bangalore- 560084

Chennai: 18, Secretariat Colony, 1st street Kilpauk, Chennai - 600010

Mumbai: 101, 1st Floor, Mahavir Darshan, Opp. Old TMC Office, Stadium Road, Jambli Naka, Thane (West) -
400601

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