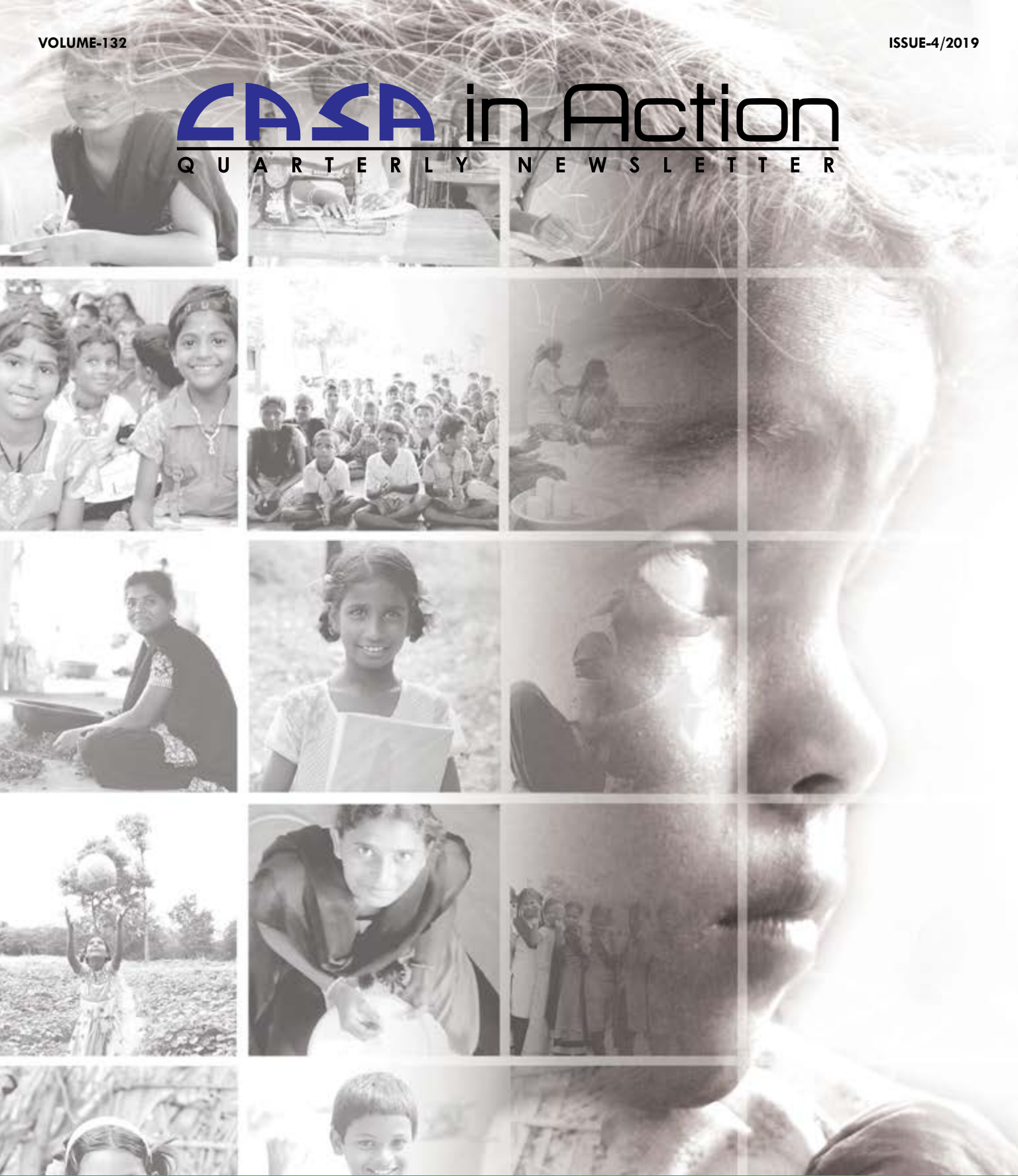


# CASA in Action

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



**CHILD LABOUR:  
A SCOURGE TO HUMANITY**

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**CHILD LABOUR:**  
A Scourge to Humanity

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# EDITORIAL

The dawn of our civilisation rests in the hands of children. Ensuring a better future is impossible without securing the environment in which children, irrespective of their socio-economic status, grow. However, since the times of war in ancient history to child labour in the contemporary world, children have been the primary victim to the family legacy and social subjugation.

While certain financially troubled families and unaware communities expect children to compensate for their economic voids; the immoral contractors, on the other hand, continue to employ children to reduce expenses. This malpractice jeopardises the physical and psychological growth of the child. Several underage labourers, exploited in unhealthy work environments, miss out on the opportunities for a better life. They get trapped in the cycle of poverty. Even nutritious food, social justice and the right to education implicitly become unclaimable privileges for them.

CASA's Child Labour Free Zone project identifies that combating child labour requires a multidimensional approach from education, community awareness to rescuing the victims and securing the economic situation of their families. Several aspects of these extensive efforts have been highlighted in this edition. It is our aim to protect the vulnerability of children until maturity rather than letting it get exploited insensitively.

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# STRIVING TO ERADICATE THE SCOURGE OF CHILD LABOUR

## CHILD LABOUR: A SCOURGE TO HUMANITY

Child labour is a form of modern slavery that has been prevalent in all corners of the world. The participation of children into harsh working conditions is a step towards the exploitation of humanity in its extreme form. Enrolling children into labour is a major obstacle towards the education and development of a child. Employing children is physically and mentally harmful as it deprives children of their all-round development and their childhood.

Poverty is often the reason why children indulge in child labour practices. As children are the future builders of our planet, it is our responsibility to nurture and empower them with positivity. Child labour not only snatches away the dreams and aspirations of a child but also depicts the role of children belonging to vulnerable communities in the society. We, as global citizens, require to protect children from discrimination as well as from all forms of neglect and exploitation and provide assistance to their basic needs.

Despite the developments that have taken place, child labour is still prevalent. It is one of the most complex problems that prevail in today's society as it creates a barrier for children to reach their fullest potential academically as well as creatively.

CASA's Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ) project aims to diminish child labour by providing free education to children and sustainable livelihood options to their families in the rural regions of the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

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# OPERATIONAL AREAS IN TAMIL NADU & ANDHRA PRADESH

## TAMILNADU



Dindigul  
District

**23**  
Villages

**3**

Bridge Course  
Centres

**2**

Vocational Skill  
Training Centre

**2**

Supplimentary  
Education

## ANDHRA PRADESH



Krishna  
District

**25**  
Villages

**5**

Bridge Course  
Centres

**2**

Vocational Skill  
Training Centre

**5**

Supplimentary  
Education

*The above mentioned numbers of Bridge Course Centres, Vocational Skill Training Centres and Supplementary Education Centres are opened each year in different villages of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu and Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh.*



# 204

Children enrolled in  
BCC, Tamil Nadu

# 253

Children enrolled  
in BCC, Andhra  
Pradesh

# 131

enrolled in regular  
school through BCC

# 126

enrolled in regular  
school through BCC

*Impact of the CLFZ project in five years (2014 -2019)*



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## BRIDGE COURSE CENTRES

Education provides opportunities of growth to an individual. CASA's Bridge Course Centres (BCC) are built on the concept of providing free education to children who have dropped out of school and have indulged in child labour due to unfavourable circumstances in their families. Children are given assistance to grow academically as well as creatively and are provided daily nutritious meals. The centres are built with a vision to bridge the gap formed in a child's life due to child labour. By enrolling children that are victims of child labour, we are assisting them to fall back on their educational track. Our volunteers go door-to-door, counsel parents on the adverse effects of child-labour and convince them to send their children to BCC for better prospects. Children are given regular classes as well as playtime to develop their cognitive skills and imagination. We further help them to enroll into the general education system of India. As education is a tool which can be used to break the cycle of poverty, children are also provided assistance to sit for 10th grade board examinations privately and are encouraged to pursue higher studies. Furthermore, we also keep in touch with the students in order to keep a track of their future endeavours in life. This in turn, not only makes children realise the importance of education but also enlightens their minds and encourages them to build their opinions and perspective in life.



*Mid-day meals at Bridge Course Centre*



*Children playing indoor games at Bridge Course Centre*

# EDUCATE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



above: Vella Charai conducting hand pollination of 'kanvali kilangu' (Flame Lily).  
left: Vella Charai at Bridge Course Centre



“ I used to work in the open fields along with my parents to conduct hand pollination of 'kanvali kilangu' flowers. Our owner would instruct us to finish one field a day. Bending and working under the scorching heat of the sun often caused me back pain and made me feel dizzy.

Vella Charai hails from the Gopalapuram village of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. He dropped out of school in 2016 when he was in 8th grade due to the financial conditions in his family. He, along with his parents, earned 150 rupees per day for their work in the fields to conduct hand pollination of 'kanvali kilangu' flowers. Flame lily, as it is popularly known, is highly toxic in nature.

Despite its deadly qualities, this plant is useful for a number of medicinal purposes as well as for the preparation of pesticides for agricultural fields. Children are put to work as their tender hands are useful in conducting artificial pollination. Vella Charai is already aware of the fatalities this plant can cause, in spite of this, he continued working in the fields by taking proper precautions.

Presently, Vella Charai attends CASA's Bridge Course Centre in his village and has discontinued working in the fields. "I want to become a police officer and serve my community when I grow up, I want my village to develop", he shared with an ambitious spirit. Bridge Course Centres aim to bridge the gap formed in a child's life due to child labour and other unfavourable circumstances.

Although, Vella Charai is liberated from the web of child labour, there are many children who are still victims of this atrocity. This global phenomenon has taken a toll on the overall development of children, depriving them of opportunities and chances to develop as an individual.

# LIBERATION FROM THE CLUTCHES OF POVERTY

Vijay resides in a modest one-room hut along with his parents and two siblings in the remote village of Vallasu, Tamil Nadu. His father is a tailor and his mother works in the rice mills near their village. In the state of their meagre livelihood source, Vijay was sent to work in a papad (thin, crisp, disc-shaped cake) making factory, far-off from home. "I would wake up every morning at 6 am, my mother would pack my lunch and then I'd leave for work and reach the factory after a one-hour long walk. My work was to knead the dough for the papad under the scorching heat and then place it in the rolling machine. After a tiresome day, I would come back home at 9 pm."

Child labour is a major cause of lack of mental, physical and emotional development in a child. Exposure to harsh working conditions can mentally drain a child and limit his potential. "When I used to go to work, I'd feel that my freedom was snatched away from me and my life had lost all prospects."

While Vijay would toil hard to finish the assigned work within time, the factory owner would often scold him for crossing the time limit. "The unpleasant working conditions would often give me a backache and I would feel dizzy after working for such long hours."

Vijay's family came to know about the Bridge Course Centre (BCC) in their village when CASA volunteers convinced his parents to resume his education. "I dropped out of school when I was in 10th grade as I failed in Tamil and Mathematics. I started working in the factory as I felt my family required financial support. When I resumed my education in Bridge Course Centre, I regained my confidence as an individual. I felt enlightened again."

CASA's BCC is not only about imparting education to children but also about making them believe in a prosperous future. "I am sitting for my 10th-grade board examinations this year. Following that, I shall pursue my higher studies as I aspire to become a police officer when I grow up. Here in Bridge Course Centre, I not only grow academically but also get a chance to play."

Vijay's mother, Selvi is the beneficiary of CASA's Income Generation Programme (IGP). "I never wanted my son to drop out of school, but the financial circumstances in my family were becoming worse. When CASA set up their Bridge Course Centre in our village, I was hopeful as I am aware that education will save my son's life."

The Child Labour Free Zone Project has rescued the education of several children like Vijay. He has now fallen back on his educational track with a bright future ahead.

Vijay, at his home, Tamil Nadu







**47% children**  
drop-out from school  
between class 1 to 10



**About 27%**  
of children between  
age 7-15 are illiterates

**43 lakh children**  
aged 5-14 years in India are  
engaged in labour work



**Only 48% girls**  
are enrolled in schools  
at primary level (I-V)



**POUL LUTHER**

Officiating Chief Zonal Officer  
South Zone



**There are many children in these regions who do not get the opportunity to study and are forced to work from a young age," shared Officiating Chief Zonal Officer, Poul Luther.**

Poul Luther, Officiating Chief Zonal Officer, South Zone, has been guiding the administration of the Child Labour Free Zone Project since its initiation. Highlighting the objective of the project, he responds, "CASA has been working towards the systematic eradication of the intricate social problems in child labour through the Child Labour Free Zone Project (CLFZ)."

Despite manifold efforts put to cease the evil practice of child labour across the country, several regions in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu continue to suffer the widespread persistence of the malice.

The girls from stereotypical households are mostly expected to engage in labour, as opposed to getting an education. Such practice aggravates the gender disparity as well. In Andhra Pradesh, the restrained female child labourers could be identified working in the cotton fields for manual cross-pollination tasks. Even at a national and global level, child labour continues to impede the growth of many tender lives and begets more social inequities.

"The major reason for employing vulnerable children in the factories is, more or less, for cheap labour. They are exploited to benefit the factories economically. Under CASA's CLFZ project, dedicated volunteers strive to rescue and counsel the families of children who are employed as labourers, on the importance of education and assist them in enrolling into our CLFZ project."

Poul Luther provided valuable insights to the CLFZ project and continued, "CASA has successfully provided education and vocational training to 80% of the rescued children, besides raising awareness amongst various communities. These efforts have been duly recognised by local authorities. The authorities aid the project by fostering infrastructural development in the villages, which helps to ensure an amiable environment for children to continue their studies." Since the inception of the CLFZ project in 2016, CASA has been able to enrol 257 children in regular schools.

"CASA's role does not end after enrolling children into regular schools. The volunteers keep track of the student's educational pursuits after the completion of their schooling."

While such endeavour guards the children against falling back into the malice of child labour, it also provides an impetus for children to further their education.

"The volunteers provide the necessary assistance by establishing linkages with government schools. A regular follow up is also conducted to make sure students attend their classes as well as to check if they are in need of help."

He further discusses on how the civil rights entitled to a child should be protected and safeguarded, "CASA's aim is to ensure that every child is given the opportunity to go to school, to develop comprehensively and follow their dreams."

From the eyes of children, there exists no sky beyond the premises where they grow. Their delicate world of sheer innocence remains limited to their dwelling space. Child labour deprives them of holistic growth. They feel that they are not entitled to experience the privileges of getting an education, safe environment or nutritious food. Child labour hinders the child's physical, social and psychological maturity. CASA's effort in emancipating children from the shackles of labour focuses on improving every aspect of their lives and ensuring secured social equity.



I would wake up early every morning to reach the cotton fields sharp at 9. My owner's strictness instilled a fear in me to complete the chores on time, or he would reduce my wage. He often shouted at me and the other children who worked under him.

## **GIRL CHILD LABOURERS IN INDIA: AN OVERLOOKED SUBJECT**



above: Manga Maheshwari participating in play activities along with her BCC classmates.  
below: Manga Maheshwari outside her hut, along with her friends.

Manga Maheshwari prised cotton buds to earn herself a meagre income of rupees 150 a day. Under the scorching heat, she would follow robotic manoeuvres to conduct artificial pollination of cotton buds.

The practise of child labour is prevalent in cotton fields as the tender hands of children are well suited for the intricate nature of conducting pollination. "I dropped out of school when I was in 5th grade as my mother's health condition was deteriorating and the financial burden of my family fell on my shoulders. I worked in the fields for more than two years. Working under the sun for hours, I would often get heatstroke and at times, even faint due to dehydration. My hands would get bruised and my back would ache after long hours of working."

Child labourers are present in the cotton industry at every stage, from plucking and pollinating cotton buds to ginning in the factories. "I always aspired to become a doctor, but my circumstances always instilled doubt in me. I would envy other children whenever I saw them attend school. My ambition to become a doctor seemed blurred with every day that went by."

Manga Maheshwari's aspirations were not shattered as she was determined to overcome the hurdles of poverty and become self-reliant. "My hope was

reaffirmed when CASA's Bridge Course Centre opened in my village. I regained my confidence once I started attending classes regularly."

Manga Maheshwari's mother is a beneficiary of CASA's Income Generation Programme (IGP) and was given assistance in establishing herself as a vegetable vendor. The remuneration amount aided her in uplifting her family conditions. As Manga Maheshwari is determined to overcome the hurdles of poverty and become self-reliable, her dreams to pursue an educational path seems more vivid as she regularly attends classes at CASA's Bridge Course Centre.





## **COTTON INDUSTRY IN INDIA**

India along with China, is responsible for 50% of the world's cotton production.

India alone produces 6.42 million metre tons of cotton every year.

A quarter of the total workforce in the cotton industry are children below 14 years.

Source: <https://bit.ly/32Ui7yI>

## **CHILD LABOUR IN COTTON INDUSTRY :**

82% of children in the cottonseed industry are working because their parents had borrowed money from the local farmer or land owner.

Children below the age of 14 account for 25% of the total workforce in cottonseed farms in India. This means that about 200,000 children work as child labourers in the cotton industry Gujarat accounts for nearly 55% of the total children employed in this sector, which translates to a number of around 110,000 children.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3f7HAJZ>

## **SOCIETAL IMPACTS ON CHILD LABOURERS IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY**

Girls account for 65% of the total of working children (below 14 years).

The proportion of girls among working children is relatively high in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

The majority of the children working in the Indian cottonseed sector belong to poor families from Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Dalits, Scheduled Tribes (STs) or Adivasi, and Other Backward Castes (OBCs).

Source: <https://bit.ly/3f7HAJZ>



“

I used to walk 4 km each day to reach school. On my way, a group of boys would come on a bike and eve-tease me.

*Tamil Selvi at BCC in S. Mawarathupatti village of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu*

## DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL DUE TO EVE- TEASING EVE-TEASING- A SOCIAL PROBLEM

“I used to walk 4 km each day to reach school. On my way, a group of boys would come on a bike and eve-tease me. This continued every day until I was reluctant to even step outside my house. I could not even sleep at night peacefully, afraid that I would have to face them again the next day.”

Tamil Selvi, 15, dropped out of school in 10th grade due to the harassment she faced regularly on her route to school. “The molestation I faced each day led me to give excuses to my family to skip school. One day I finally confided about this to my mother.” It was not just Tamil, but also her classmates who faced this abuse every day. “The men used to ride on their bikes at our place and pass lewd remarks, use obscene language and threaten us.”

Gender-based violence incurs devastating consequences. Incidents of eve-teasing and molestation can psychologically wound young girls as they continue to live under threat. Despite the developments that have taken place in the modern world, we lag behind in working towards women's rights and safety.

Tamil Selvi is a resident of S. Mawarathupatti village of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu. Her education was

brought to a halt as her family was worried about her safety. “I was not the only one who suffered. My classmate's education was discontinued too and she was married against her will.”

The discontinuation in Tamil's education trapped her in the clutches of child labour practices. “I started tamarind deseeding when I dropped out of school and earned 100 rupees per week. The hammer I used for the de-seeding bruised my hands and scarred my future.”

Tamil Selvi has now enrolled herself at CASA's Bridge Course Centre in her village. She attempts to get back on her educational track and sit for her 10th-grade board examinations. Her mother is a beneficiary of CASA's Income Generation Programme (IGP) and was provided with a remuneration of 10,000 rupees. “The teachers at the Bridge Course Centre guide me well and assist me in growing academically.”

Her spirit to embrace life stands out as an example as she intends to give her 10th-grade board examinations this year. CASA shall continue to assist Tamil in her educational endeavours as she chooses to take the road of enlightenment and groom herself for a better tomorrow.



# DEDICATION TOWARDS HUMANITY AND EDUCATION



I had seen the misery that child labour brings into one's life, as my two elder sisters had both been a victim of this societal evil.

*Above: Saraswati taking classes at the Bridge Course Centre in Gopalapuram, Tamil Nadu*

"I had seen the misery that child labour brings into one's life, as my two elder sisters had both been a victim of this societal evil."

Saraswati is a teacher at CASA's Bridge Course Centre in Gopalapuram, Tamil Nadu. "I am the only person from my village to hold a Master's degree. I know the value of education as I am well aware of the stability it brings in one's life."

Coming from a financially instable background, Saraswati worked hard as an athlete and received sports quota for her educational pursues. "I found out about CASA's initiative towards child labour through the co-ordinator of the CLFZ project."

As a teacher at BCC, Sarawati faces many challenges to rescue children from dangerous activities. "I personally go and counsel parents on the ill-effects of child labour, making them realise the importance of education and how it helps a child in building his/her individuality."

Despite the hurdles that Saraswati faces, her efforts of personally going door-to-door and counselling parents have not gone in vain. "At the BCC, I make a point that hours are distributed properly and children receive enough play and study time. There are indoor and outdoor games and activities that help in creative development of a child."

It is because of the sheer commitment of Saraswati as a teacher, that the circumstances of several children have been uplifted.



above: Prashant studying at the BCC in Mekalaguddi village, Andhra Pradesh.

## BONDED LABOUR- ENSLAVED AT THE TENDER AGE OF 12

“One day I came back from school and found out that I had to leave home and live in somebody else’s house. I was 12 years old and completely unaware of what would happen next. My father told me that everything would be fine.” Prashant, 16, shares his story when he was a victim of debt bondage. His father is a dairy farmer and earns little to serve the needs of his family. “My mother was severely ill at that time and my father required money for her treatment. He had borrowed 30,000 rupees from a landowner and sent me away to work at his house.”

Prashant’s life took a turn when he dropped out of school in 6th grade and started working as a domestic help at his land owner’s home. “ I used to wake up at 5 am in the morning every day and clean the entire house. I would then go to his farms and clean the cowsheds. As time went by, my landlord’s behaviour towards me became very harsh. He would cruelly scold me and deprive me of daily meals for committing minor mistakes. There was this one instance when my body was aching a lot, but my landlord forced me to work by humiliating me in front of everyone. I want to

Prashant and his sister Pranavi







become a teacher when I grow up, but my heart would break when I would see my landowner's children go to school. I would sit in the corner and cry." Prashant shared that his owner would not even give him spare time to sit back and relax by overburdening him with work.

"I never thought that my time there would last as long as one year. I stayed there in the hope that my father would come and pick me up. Sometimes, the thought of running away home would also cross my mind but I held myself back for my mother's health."

Prashant's family belongs to Chatrai village of Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh. As his mother's health improved, she took another loan in order to liberate her son from the chains of bonded labour. CASA's Income Generation Programme (IGP) lent her a helping hand by assisting her in starting a vegetable shop. She was able to rescue her son who now lives peacefully in his modest house. He has been enrolled in CASA's Bridge Course Centre (BCC) to fill the gap in his education and is planning to sit for his 10th-grade examinations.

"My life has now fallen on track by attending CASA's Bridge Course Centre. I can now fulfil my dream to become a teacher. My prime goal right now is to clear my 10th-grade examinations. I would never like to see someone else suffer the way I did and indulge in child labour."

Despite the enactment of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, debt bondage is still prevalent in

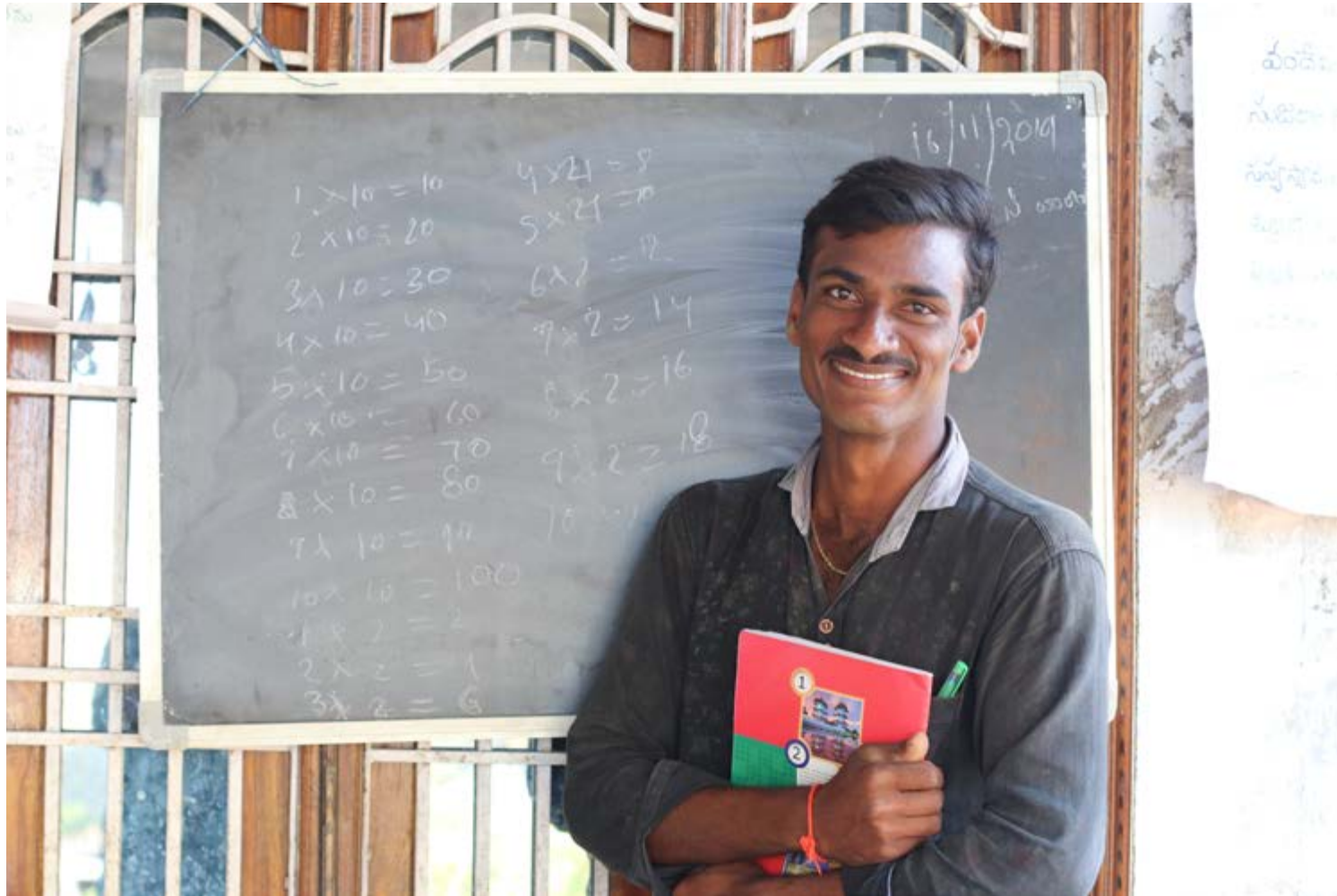
various marginalised societies of India. Debt bondage is another term replaced for 'slavery'. Bonded child labour occurs when children are put to work to repay a loan taken by their parents or guardians. The entire process of the system leads to the exploitation of a family, taking advantage of their financial circumstances, and snatching away freedom from their children.

CASA's CLFZ project has assisted many families that have suffered on similar lines like Prashant's. Inculcating the importance of education and poverty alleviation are the prime objectives of CASA's CLFZ project. By creating a positive channel, CASA is striving towards the upliftment of the vulnerable by providing free education and sustainable livelihood options.



**My life has now fallen on track by attending CASA's Bridge Course Centre.**

*Left: Prashant sitting outside his hut with his mother.  
Right: Prashant studying at the porch of his house.*



Nagaraju at BCC in Mekalaguddi village, Andhra Pradesh.

## SILENT SCREAMS OF THE OPPRESSED SOULS



I missed the comfort of my family and my mother's warmth. I just wanted to return to the safety of my home.



By Isha Sharma  
Intern - Communications

As Nagaraju sits in a classroom, surrounded by students who are five to six years younger than him, he gazes out the window, daydreaming of the plethora of opportunities that lie ahead. His age has never been an obstacle in his zeal for learning. Determined to grow, his age difference has never fettered him from his scholastic journey.

Reminiscing about his former, impoverished life, Nagaraju shares, "I missed the comfort of my family and my mother's warmth. I just wanted to return to the safety of my home."

Life had been extremely despairing for Nagaraju. His father, an agricultural labourer, worked to his bone to provide for the family. However, when Nagaraju's mother fell ill and was bedridden, Nagaraju's fate took a turn for the worse. His father took a loan of 40,000 rupees from a moneylender for his wife's urgent medical needs. Unable to pay back the loan in time, the family had no choice but to send their son for work.

Thus, began Nagaraju's life as a bonded labourer. Dropping out of school in the eighth standard, he worked for three years as a domestic worker in a house that didn't appreciate him to the least. Pauperised and coerced to work in abysmal conditions in a foreign village, his daily routine

started with cleaning the cowsheds and proceeding to work in fields, under the scorching heat. On returning to his room, he was given rancid food which he could hardly eat. He would try to fuel up on as much water as his fatigued body could sustain.

"I was often berated for trivial things and they incepted the idea of how vulnerable I am, in my head. I had no self - confidence."

He would spend his nights crying to himself, as feelings of loneliness would consume him. When he would see his owner's children get ready for school, his heart would sink and a sharp pain of dejection would pierce through his chest.

"I used to dream of having a stable job and living a prosperous life. Those three years, I stopped dreaming."

After enduring indefinite abuse, Nagaraju ran away. He made his way to his native – village, where he told his family of his exploitation. Pained by their son's plight, they were glad to have him home. He found a job, working the fields on a tractor and was able to fend for himself, although meagrely.

Nagaraju was brought to CASA's BCC by the family of tractor owners, who took note of his passion for education and thus helped him restart his academic journey. Now 18, he is focusing on clearing his 10th standard examination. He is extremely happy to be able to study and work towards his future. His family has also been provided with financial support to fill the void created by the loss of income and to sustain their livelihood.

He is often asked if he feels out of place to be in a class consisting of children who are much younger than him, where he is the eldest of the group. He happily shares, "I now have the opportunity to hold a pen instead of a tool. My calloused hands now have paint smudged on them. Now, I run not from my owner but with my friends. I am finally free."

CASA shall relentlessly strive to rescue children who have a fervent inclination to study and open the door of education for them, which have been closed by the manacles of child labour.

*Nagaraju attending class at BCC.*





*Pranavi, standing confidently with a bright future ahead.*

## HOW THE FIELDS HAVE TURNED



**My life has now fallen  
on track by attending  
CASA's Bridge Course  
Centre.**



By Isha Sharma  
Intern - Communications

"I had forgotten what it felt like to play with friends. In my free time, I used to look for shade under a tree, to steal a quick nap."

Hailing from Chatrai village of Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh, Pranavi was used to a life of manual labour. When her mother fell gravely ill, her family had to take a major loan from moneylenders. Her father, who is a daily wage earner, did not earn enough, working as a seasonal agricultural farmer in cornfields and also as a municipal corporation worker, when the season for cultivation ends.

Pranavi was burdened not only with the challenge of supporting her family financially but also with the difficulty of liberating her brother from the manacles of bonded labour.

Pranavi had no choice but to drop out of school, in order to bring some money to the table. She was employed for plucking chillies and sifting seeds, thus earning a meagre amount of 150 rupees per day.

Her daily routine was arduous, starting with toiling under the scorching heat in the chilli fields and proceeding to evenings consisting of household chores; tending after her mother's medical needs and cooking for the family.

CASA volunteers approached Pranavi's family to make them understand the importance of education. She along with her brother joined the Bridge Course Centre. CASA's CLFZ programme gave the family a monetary support of ten thousand rupees and also provided her mother with the opportunity of managing a vegetable cart to earn additional income.

Thus, Pranavi's entire family has been given support in order to uplift them from their current miserly state.

Having found a life beyond the fields, Pranavi came to realise how she can use education as a tool to liberate herself from the shackles of child labour and chase her dreams.

She was also given the opportunity to streamline into regular schooling and is now preparing for her 10th standard examination.

"At school, we all sit together to have our lunch. I often notice how chillies are used as spices in the dishes cooked at school and wonder how, a year ago, it used to be me, plucking chillies for others to use."

The field of chillies, where Pranavi spent her afternoons, plucking and working her finger to her bone has now been replaced with the field of education. Now she cries tears of joy and gratitude, whereas tears of helplessness and sorrow are behind her.



above: Pranavi interacting with her teacher at BCC.  
below: Pranavi attending class at BCC.





By Sudarshana Chatterjee  
Intern - Communications



*Prashant, along with his teacher Sandhya.*

## INSPIRING CHANGE AND NURTURING DREAMS THROUGH EDUCATION

From a school dropout who was once engaged in child labour, to an aspiring anaesthetist, Prashant's story comes with its trials and triumphs.

The number of children working as child labourers in India presents a grim picture. As per Census 2011, the total child population in India in the age group (5-14) years is 259.6 million. Of these, 10.1 million (3.9% of total child population) are working, either as 'main workers' or as 'marginal workers'. Besides, more than 42.7 million children in India are out of school. The numbers may drop but the situation is still horrifying. Having their education abruptly cut short, these children are forced to work hard to earn a livelihood which adversely affects their physical and mental health.

Prashant's tale is on similar lines. Hailing from Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh, he dropped out of school in seventh grade and started working as a bike repair mechanic, earning a meagre income of fifty rupees a day, in order to sustain his family of five members. "My father is an alcoholic. Earlier he used to be a cycle repair mechanic, but the addiction of alcohol got the better of him. He used to come home drunk and scramble around the house creating riots. Soon our financial condition worsened and seeing no hope in his improvement, I dropped out."

This was until CASA reached out to him. He got enrolled in CASA's Bridge Course Centre in 2016. The Centre enabled him to resume his education and prepared him to study tenth grade from open school.

Apart from just helping in his education, CASA aided him in learning many life lessons. A teacher-volunteer at the Centre, Sandhya, encouraged him to pursue his education and follow his career path. Under her tutelage, he realised the evils of child labour and how he could improve his life. Her dedicated approach helped Prashant to overcome his shortcomings.

Prashant has now completed his tenth-grade studies and wants to continue his education. "I aim to become an anaesthetist. By being a doctor, I want to serve the community by helping others in the same way they helped me to succeed in life." His gleaming eyes are reminiscent of the pain and struggle that he went through, but they are also brimming with the hope for a better future. Even though the number of children working as child labourers in India decreased from 12 million to 4 million between 2001 and 2011 as per Census data, many children continue to work as labourers, losing out on their education and their youthful years. CASA initiated the Child Labour Free Zone project to eradicate child labour and allow them to resume their education. Under CLFZ, CASA opened Bridge Course Centres, especially for school dropouts. The main objective of the programme is to encourage children to continue education by creating a safe place and also ensure their holistic development.

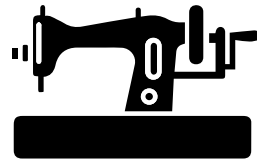
It is because of Samaritans like Sandhya and their sheer commitment towards the society that many students like Prashant have a second chance they deserve to lead a meaningful and improved life.

# VOCATIONAL SKILL TRAINING

Unemployment and poverty have always been setbacks for the youth of rural India. CASA's vocational training has provided sustainable employment opportunities to the youth that do not hold much of educational background or are school dropouts due to child labour. This training facility has empowered young women and men in their journey to become independent.

## TRAINING IMPARTED TO YOUNG WOMEN

Young women are trained for a period of six months with tailoring skills that further serves as an alternate livelihood option. This training not only inculcates a sense of self-confidence but also empowers them with entrepreneurship skills. A number of young women that have been associated with our training programme have been placed in various companies or are running their own production units.



### TAMILNADU



# 166

youth trained in Vocational Skill Training centres

### ANDHRA PRADESH



# 275

youth trained in Vocational Skill Training centres





Laxmi sitting outside the production unit's shop.

## BIG CHANGES HAPPEN WITH COLLECTIVE EFFORT



By Pankhuri  
Associate - Communications

"Presently, we are receiving orders in bulk. Our production unit is running very busy and everyone is occupied with work." Laxmi, a proud manager of 'Women's ready-made Dress Production Unit' supported by CASA in Pudupatti village of Dindigul district in Tamil Nadu, shares her busy schedule of a day at the production unit.

10 years ago, this was not the same scenario for Laxmi, who is now occupied, keeping up with organising work. Despite holding an educational qualification of only until 10th grade, she chose to sustain herself with her tailoring skills.

Laxmi, 32, was the only individual in her entire village who was skilled in tailoring. In 2015, her talent was given a new perspective when she was chosen to work under CASA's Child Labour Free Zone Project for the skill training programme as a vocational teacher. "When I got married and settled in this village, I witnessed a number of child labour practices. I wanted to rescue the children who had indulged into child labour. I joined the organisation in the hope that I will be able to help young girls in their journey of becoming independent.

So far, I have provided training to 70 girls. Initially, it was very difficult for me to convince families to send their daughters to learn and develop a skill as they were making money out of sending them for labour work. My confidence grew with time and I was able to persuade the parents to send their daughters to learn something for free instead of letting them indulge in child labour."

As a guide and counsellor, Laxmi has experienced a number of hurdles. "There was this one instance of a girl who used to work in cotton mills. Her childhood was exploited without concern as she was working under gruelling conditions. The company enrolled her as she was tall and could not be identified as a child labourer. She would often fall sick by inhaling small cotton particles in the mills as she worked for long hours. After recognising the negative impact of the work on her health, I approached her parents, they denied that she was a minor but I was already aware of what her age was. I convinced her family to enrol her at CASA's skill training centre. Today, she is placed in a fabric company in Madurai and is able to meet her financial needs."





(top left) Laxmi displaying the garments stitched by the unit  
 (top right) The members of the Production Unit  
 (bottom left) Production unit received recognition for their efforts  
 (bottom right) Laxmi along with her husband  
 Laxmi stitching garments at the Production Unit

'Women's ready-made Dress Production Unit' was started in 2018. "The idea of coming up with a production unit was an outcome of the girls itself. Many of them got placed in different companies but some wanted to start a venture of their own. Hence, we came up with the idea of our own unit." Laxmi approached CASA and was provided with a remuneration amount of 1 lakh rupees which was used to set up the unit.

Laxmi's husband is a farmer who earns only during the harvest season, but with her support, the family is able to meet their needs. Her husband shared "My wife is not only catering the family but the children in need as child labour is a major issue in our village. Now, people recognise me as her husband and I am proud of the work she does."

Laxmi now advocates towards child rights, where every child is rescued from child labour practices. She always possessed a vision to create a social impact in her society. "I have observed a change after the implementation of the CLFZ project in my village. This year, we rescued 12 girls from child labour itself."

After encountering a number of hurdles in her journey to change the atmosphere of her village where every child is given the opportunity to become self-reliable, Laxmi believes her work has not only given her a purpose but a new identity.



# REKINDLE THE HOPE TO LAPSE A CRUEL PRACTICE



I came in contact with Sandhya ma'am (CASA's volunteer) and got enrolled in the skill training programme. I feel happy to learn here."

Within the periphery of our cocooned existence, we tend to grow unaware of the anxieties that are persistent in our generation. Educational and residential security along with the perennial fulfilment of arising needs may appear obvious to the children growing in the privileged circles of the society. Still, the story is not the same for all.

Raj Lakshmi, a generous woman in her mid-twenties, battles an immense concern; that her son may encounter similar miseries that she endured in her childhood. She was exploited as a child labourer in the past, toiling in the agricultural sector. Owing to the financial deficiencies in her family, the underaged Raj Lakshmi stepped into child labour with mud works and then laboured in the

field for Rupees 100 per working day.

Child labourers are unlawfully employed for cheap labour. The insensitive employers intend to pinch money and maximise their profits by underpaying the naive children who are barely aware of justice. Thus, youngsters from unaware and financially disadvantaged families are propelled into the cycle of poverty, being deprived of educational and healthier growth opportunities. "Two years back, I got married. I have a son. My husband migrates to Hyderabad for earning." As the years went by, she deeply felt the pangs of a profound sense of inadequacy, for she did not wish to continue getting exploited to earn.

Raj Lakshmi at the Skill training centre.





left: Raj Lakshmi with CASA staff.

below: Raj Lakshmi at Vocational Training Centre.

Raj Lakshmi turned self-reliant in her job as a tailor. She feels secured and relieved with her current job and doesn't want to recall those harsh days of her life. She narrates that the skill-training programme has confirmed her hopes and dignity in a life where she is not overworked and is far away from social vices.

On a broader perspective, illiteracy, malnutrition, paucities, and child labour have interconnected roots that disturb the lives of several children in India. The psychological, social and physical growths of child labourers are immensely affected due to the stress they bear at a very tender age. Raj Lakshmi is aware of the fate that many children in her region suffer. "I want to earn well for my son's future. I want my child to get a good education. Due to my family conditions, I had to quit my studies, but I don't want this to repeat with my child."

But her ambitions are not limited to protecting the future of her child. Raj Lakshmi says, "I aspire to train and support others who are suffering from child labour like I used to. I want to make them self-reliant and bring a change to their lives."

Through CLFZ project, CASA has been extensively striving to channelise all the possible efforts towards uplifting the lives of children caught in the trap of child labour. Besides rescuing them from an unsuitable work environment, we are also endeavouring to reshape their lives for a better future successfully.



By Kajol Tanaya  
Intern - Communications



I came in contact with Sandhya ma'am (CASA's volunteer) and got enrolled in the skill training programme. I feel happy to learn here.



My life was tough, toiling away in the fields. It was very difficult to work in the hot weather. With no means to further my education, I had to drop out of school and I was a child labourer for many years.

However, 20-year old Lavanya's life has been made much easier and less burdensome with the Vocational Skill Training programme that she has had the opportunity to enrol in, through CASA. She has also been successful in imparting skills to others, boosting their self-confidence and leadership skills. She is extremely happy and grateful to CASA for the support given to her.

**-Lavanya**

Chetrai, Nuzvid - Andhra Pradesh



When I was 12 years old, my father passed away. Owing to this, it was natural for me to drop out of school and start earning for my family. However, with the support of my mother, I studied up to 10th standard, post which I dropped out of school and began to look for a job.

Nagamani's life ameliorated when she was informed about CASA through the community leader of her village. Without having a second thought, she enrolled herself into CASA's Vocational Skill Training programme for better prospects. She also received due encouragement from her relatives who supported and respected her. Now a 17-year-old, she has begun training other girls in her village, helping them stand on their own feet. She also plans to start her own venture by making use of the vocational skills she has learnt at CASA.

**-Nagamani**

Chetrai, Nuzvid - Andhra Pradesh





## SHARING THE ART OF EMPOWERMENT

Art is not just a skill or excellence. It is an expression of the inner-self. While watching her inner-motivation cast a reflection over the tailored patterns at hand, Sarla realised that her hardships are softening a little in her job as a tailor. Well, why not? Every human deserves a life of dignity and social security while engaging in the field of their intrinsic interests.

But fate did shower many hardships over the 32-year-old Sarla, who also has a family of four to sustain. So with an impeccable determination, she decided to leap through the hurdles. "I ran out of the resources to support my family. It has been a rough journey for me, with many ups and downs, to attain economic stability." Hailing from a marginalised community of Andhra Pradesh, Sarla says that the art of tailoring was her source of happiness and she did not intend to limit this happiness to herself.

With a motivation to impart and share the art with others, Sarla contacted CASA to work as a trainer under the Vocational Skill Training programme. In her role as a teacher, over the past two years, she has given training in the skill of tailoring and embroidery to over sixty young girls from her village. Not only did it help the young girls connect to their skills, but it also uplifted them from their state of financial and social misery.



above: Sarla at the Skill Training Centre, Chetrai - Andhra Pradesh.

below: Teaching students in garment preparation.



Sarla assisting students with garment preparation.

Sarla also devotes all her effort as a vocational trainer to empower the middle-aged women who are either school dropouts or housewives. She travelled four kilometres daily to reach the training spot. Her teaching skills have given her more expertise in revising and conveying the art of tailoring.

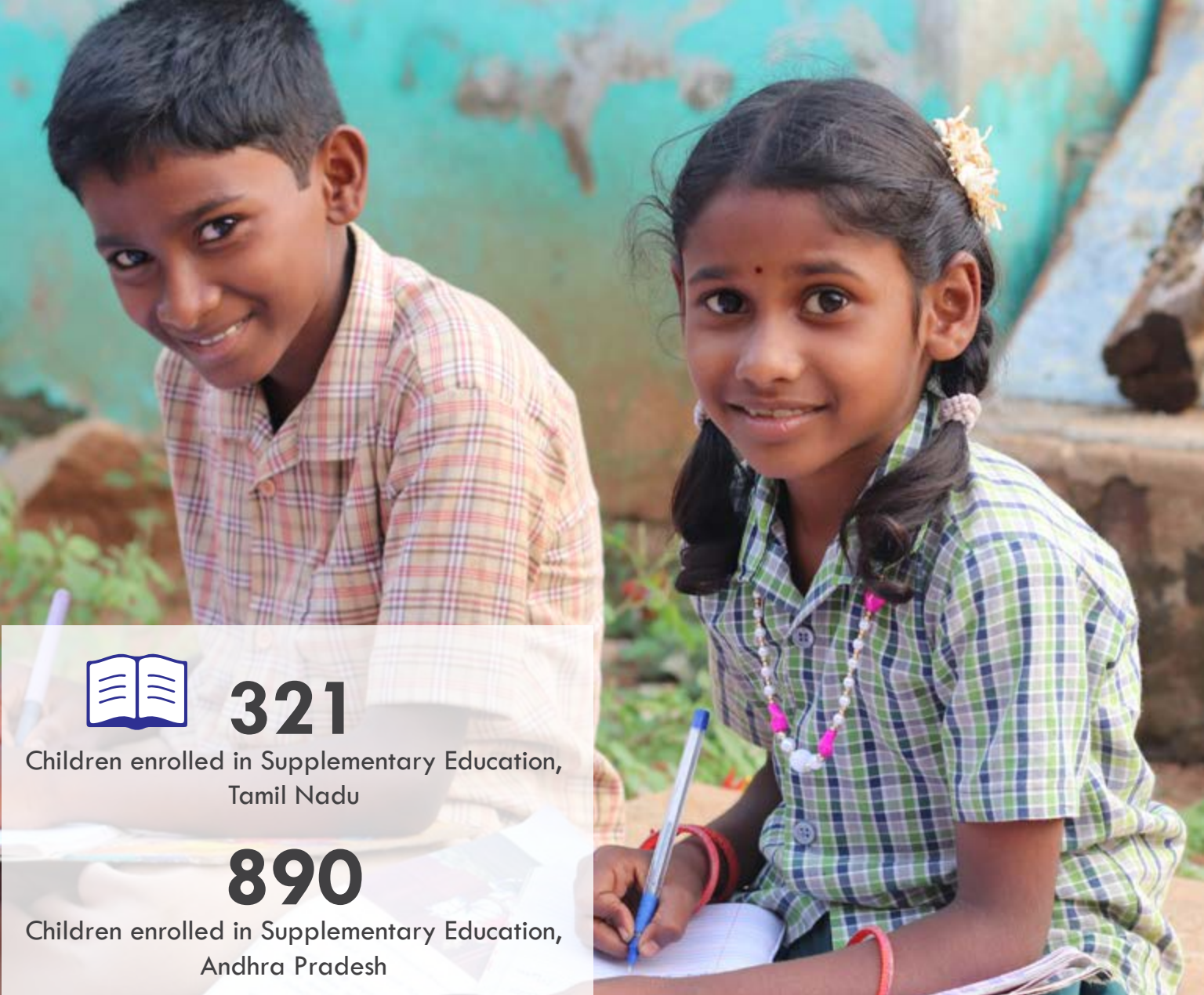
“As more and more women are able to stand on their own feet and provide for their families, I can see the arrival of a social and economic change that is progressively transforming our village.”

Sarla has played an integral role in transforming the lives of many women, who can now fend for themselves and maintain their family's sustenance. “I had started tailoring to help make my ends meet and now it gives me immense happiness to see women becoming financially independent and their self- confidence improving.”

CASA endeavours not only to empower the women with skill-training but to also actively recognise the leadership qualities in women who can bring about a positive change in the lives of others. With a sense of belonging to the community, women like Sarla can be the catalyst to the improvement of social and financial predicament of the marginalised strata of the society.



**I had started tailoring to help make my ends meet and now it gives me immense happiness to see women becoming financially independent and their self- confidence improving.**



**321**

Children enrolled in Supplementary Education,  
Tamil Nadu

**890**

Children enrolled in Supplementary Education,  
Andhra Pradesh

*Class being held at Supplementary education centre  
at Pandiyanur village, Tamil Nadu*

## SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION



Lack of parental education and resources are the main challenges that rural India faces in terms of education. The Supplementary Education Centres provide additional tuitions, free of charge, to school going children from CLFZ project areas. This measure has helped children in clearing their concepts with one on one interaction and has also decreased the dropout rates among students. Under this initiative, peer learning is also an educational strategy which is incorporated among children where senior students play a crucial role in teaching their juniors. The supplementary education classes are held after school hours on all weekdays in the evenings. Children are also provided with nutritious evening snacks. A number of brainstorming games and extra-curricular activities are held from time to time. The teachers work towards incorporating creative skills as well as academic development. This has provided encouragement to study further and has also inculcated the value of education among children. The dropout rates in our project areas have reduced after the implementation of our programme.



I always make it a point to come up with creative and interactive ideas in class for my children to grow academically as well as creatively. I feel privileged to be in this position where I am able to provide a platform to children where they can realize the importance of education and empower themselves.

-Rajalaxmi, Supplementary education teacher, Pandiyanur village, Tamil Nadu



I have been associated with CASA as a supplementary education teacher for 3 years. I have students from 6th grade to 10th grade and I make it a point to hold interactive sessions among my students in a way that the senior students can help the junior students and assist them in clearing their doubts. I feel proud to be associated with this project as the children from my village are receiving educational guidance for free.

-Durga Rao, Supplementary education teacher, Sapparpeta village, Andhra Pradesh





Children's Assembly being held at Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh.

## CHILDREN'S ASSEMBLY

The concept of coming up with a children's assembly emerged out of the urgency to make children aware of the various child rights and trends that are emerging in the educational sector. This measure aims to provide a voice to every child in the remotest villages of our Child Labour Free Zone project areas and to inculcate in them, a sense of responsibility as a global citizen, in taking a stand against the violation of child rights. Altogether, the assembly consists of children from our Bridge Course Centres as well as our Supplementary Education Centres. The assembly comprises of various departments headed by ministers that are carried out by the children itself. Interactive sessions are held from time to time at the block as well as state levels.

Mock parliaments are held regularly to incorporate leadership skills among the children. The topic of discussion varies from village development initiatives such as water shortage issues and lack of infrastructure to child labour issues in their respective regions.

The participants also encourage victims of child labour to pursue education as it is the only tool to grow and develop a perspective in life. They counsel their families on the merits of education, to enroll their children into CASA's Bridge Course Centres, in order to rescue them from the web of labour. These initiatives

have brought a great deal of impact in the lives of several children that belong to the vulnerable and marginalised communities of rural India.

The significance of forming a children's assembly is an important step as it encourages the participation of children, eventually turning them into empowered individuals. Proper healthcare and education are viable necessities for a child to grow and evolve.

Children of the villages who are not enrolled in any of CASA's programmes can also take part in these discussions. The agenda of such forums is for children to recognise their rights and understand the education policy of their country.

At the block level, children from several villages participate and at the state level, children from the blocks that fall under the district of Nuzvid in Andhra Pradesh as well as Dindigul in Tamil Nadu participate. Lastly, the Children Convention Programme is held to raise awareness on child labour and various events are organised under it. Several activities are also held which helps students inculcate crucial soft skills.

Along with their educational needs, it is important for children to develop important interpersonal skills to grow holistically. The Children's Assembly aims to provide an environment for children to learn such comprehensive skills and thrive.

# TO LEARN COMMUNITY TOGETHERNESS FROM CHILDREN ASSEMBLY



While bearing the bricks in the industrial area, the dripping sweats on Vijay's forehead flow in parallel to his anguish underneath the skin. The 16 years old boy's mind still goes back to the day when life was uncomplicated. He was leading the life of a regular sixth grader, attending school to receive primary education.

Vijay's parents worked as daily wage labourers at a construction site near their village. His life took an ugly turn when his father encountered an accident at the site and succumbed to his injuries.

It was an unsettling incident and an unbearable loss for his family. The death of the man of the family threatened their sustenance absolutely. Despite their emotional grief and the unstable predicament, stomachs were to be fed and daily needs were to be met. With the cleaving tear in the financial fabric, the responsibility to stitch the ends together fell on Vijay and his mother who now toil as daily-wage labourers in the construction sites. The converging strands of compulsion, financial distress, emotional stress and family's responsibility started tugging his life away from normalcy and he dropped out of school.

Vijay resides in a rented single-compartment room with his mother, younger sister and grandmother. The rent, ration and other daily expenses are settled by the amount that Vijay and his mother earn collectively. His daily life is no different from those labouring for hours in

the construction sites but his physical stature is no better than any child as old as him. This disparity is not only disadvantageous but also extremely unjust to his growth years. To help Vijay break free from the compulsion of labour and trace his way back to education, the members of CASA's Child Assembly met Vijay's mother.

They counselled Vijay's mother to enrol him into CASA's Bridge Course Centre for helping him cover the gap created in his process of learning. Education is imperative in the initial years of growth. Not only does it widen one's perspective of the world around him, but it also opens up several career opportunities for him in the future. With the discussion highlighting the impact of labour on Vijay's growth, the participants of Children's Assembly were able to motivate his family to help him rebuild his life.

CASA's initiative to generate community awareness against child labour and foster the participation of children through assemblies have helped strengthen the grounds to eradicate child labour. The lack of deeper insights into a child's psychological state adding to the failure in measuring the grave repercussions of child labour needs to be addressed in the first place to achieve community awareness. CASA believes that the broader and deeper connection established through Children's Assembly, shall prove extremely beneficial in rescuing many more children like Vijay.

*Vijay along with his family.*





**Karuna Garan,**  
Assistant Project  
Coordinator, CASA



**The role of parents also affects the educational continuity of children and forces them into child labour.**



CASA initiated the Restoring Lost Childhood Project (RLCP) in the year 1997, and by the year 2007, we rescued over 6000 children in Andhra Pradesh and 12000 in Tamil Nadu from the grip of child labour. Due to CASA's attention to Child Rights and Development, we could rescue the children employed in bidi rolling, allied agricultural work, hotels, and in all other forms of labour and enrol 80-90% of them to schools and training centres.

Karuna Garan, Assistant Project Coordinator, CASA, has been an active crusader in CASA's endeavour to eradicate child labour. Reflecting upon the initial days, Karuna Garan narrates.

As per his observation, "The role of parents also affects the educational continuity of children and forces them into child labour. Single parenthood, alcoholism, migration in search of employment, and so forth could be held responsible for the perpetuation of this practice. Due to the lack of support from the education system, the children resuming their studies also find it harder to cope up with the ones who have never discontinued."

There are also certain hideous practices, prevalent in the region, which disturbs the parenthood base and the growth of children, "Several young girls in the age of 13-14 years fall victim to child marriage. These girls, so as to say, children, attain motherhood at the tender age of 16-18 years. This has to be opposed, therefore, even communities have been supportive of us in filing cases against this evil practice."

Karuna Garan focuses light on the response of the children and their parents. "Our efforts get cordially recognised. The children acknowledge, 'I don't want to work, I don't want to live like a slave or a worker at this age. I want to study like the privileged children, the way they are going to school by bus, by cycle, with books and bags, I want to enjoy that.'

Our team also feels happy when they come to visit us. It is a felicitation to see the change that we were able to bring in their lives and it further motivates us to continue as the key to a progressive change"



**146**

Beneficiaries in both  
Tamil Nadu and Andhra  
Pradesh received  
financial support under  
Income Generation  
Programme in five years  
(2014 - 2019)



## INCOME GENERATION PROGRAMME

CASA's main objective is to enhance the sustenance of rural households. A child is indulged into labour due to the dire circumstances of his/her family. In order to fill this gap, our Income Generation programme provides alternative livelihood solutions to the family. This programme is specifically designed for the families of the children that attend our Bridge Course Centres. Our initiatives assist families to break through the cycle of poverty, allowing them to pursue better opportunities. The families are provided with alternative sustainable livelihood options such as egg selling, vegetable vending, petty shops etc. This in turn, financially assists the family and rescues their children from the trap of child labour.



Sujata received aid from CASA to sell vegetables.

## A RELEASE FROM THE BONDAGE

Narrates, Sujata (name changed), whose children were caught in the hideous practice of bonded labour. She was unwell when her husband borrowed a sum of Rs.30,000 to meet their financial needs. To pay off the debt, her son and daughter (Prashant and Pranavi), worked as child labourers.

India has the highest number of children working under harsh conditions to either meet the family's economic needs or to abide by the compulsion of caste or bondage. They lose their childhood to earning a meagre amount against the hard work that they are anyways not supposed to do. Prashant and Pranavi were under the grip of child labour to compensate for the amount incurred by their family.

Sujata arranged for the debt repayment to release her children. Yet, the financial uncertainty of the family had the potential to risk the children to labour in the future. CASA helped Sujata through the CLFZ initiative and enrolled Prashant and Pranavi in the Bridge Course Centre. The course of rebuilding their lives was problematic without economic security in the family. Therefore, under the Income Generation programme of CLFZ, CASA issued a sum of Rs 10,000 to Prashant's Mother and also assisted her in setting up a vegetable shop.

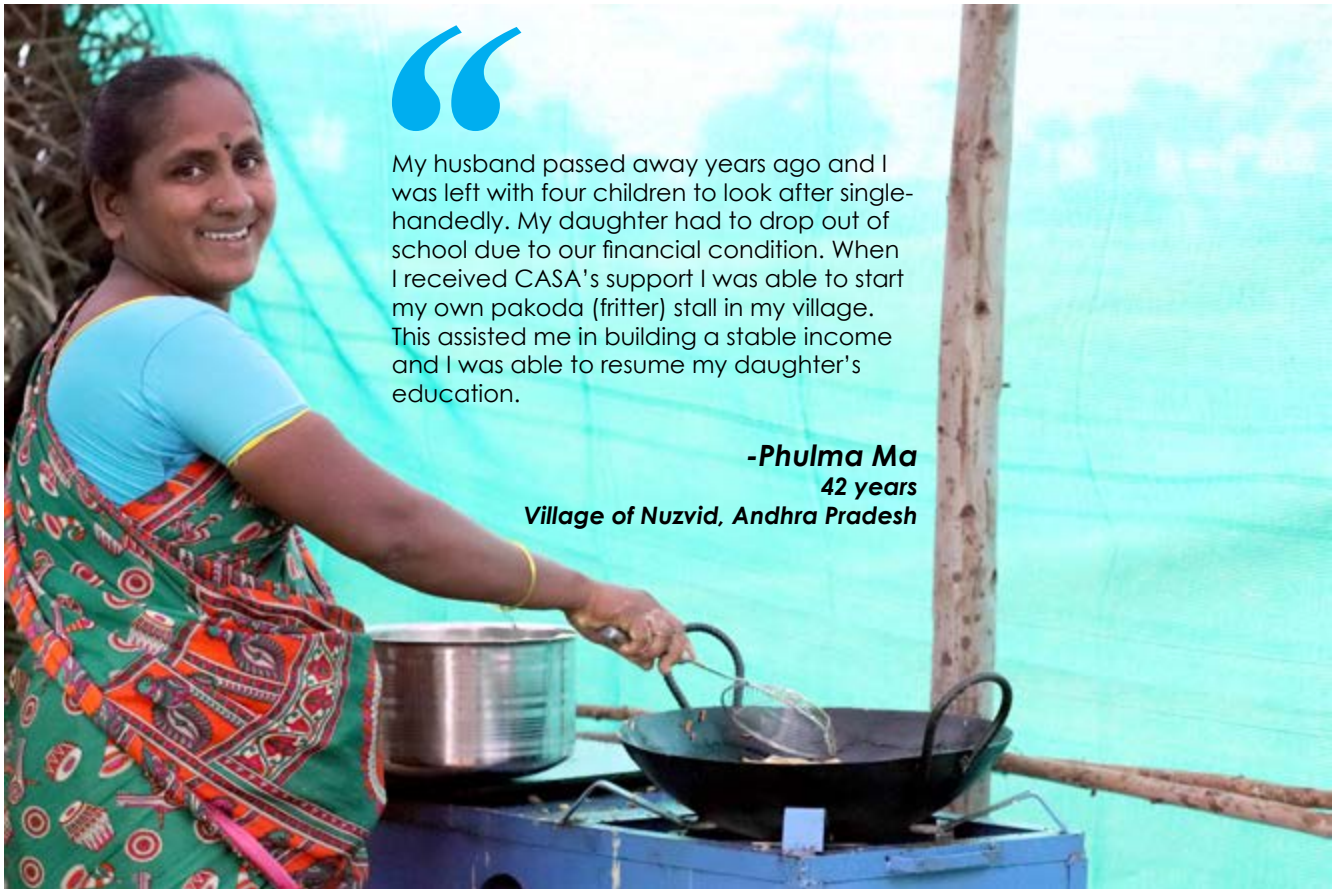
Through the earnings from the vegetable shop, Prashant's mother fills the economic voids of the family. Stable circumstances also enabled Prashant and Pranavi to continue studying. Both the children had dropped out of their schools at an early age. Through CASA's Bridge course centre, they were able to catch up with their studies and continue with their schooling.

"CASA has helped me release my children from bonded Child Labour and has empowered me with a better source of livelihood."

CASA's CLFZ programme strengthens the security of the family to safeguard the future of the children who have been under the grips of child labour. With socio-economic security, the chances of returning to the misery of child labour can be declined significantly. CASA directs every possible effort towards protecting vulnerable children from exploitation.



**CASA has helped me release my children from bonded Child Labour and has empowered me with a better source of livelihood.**

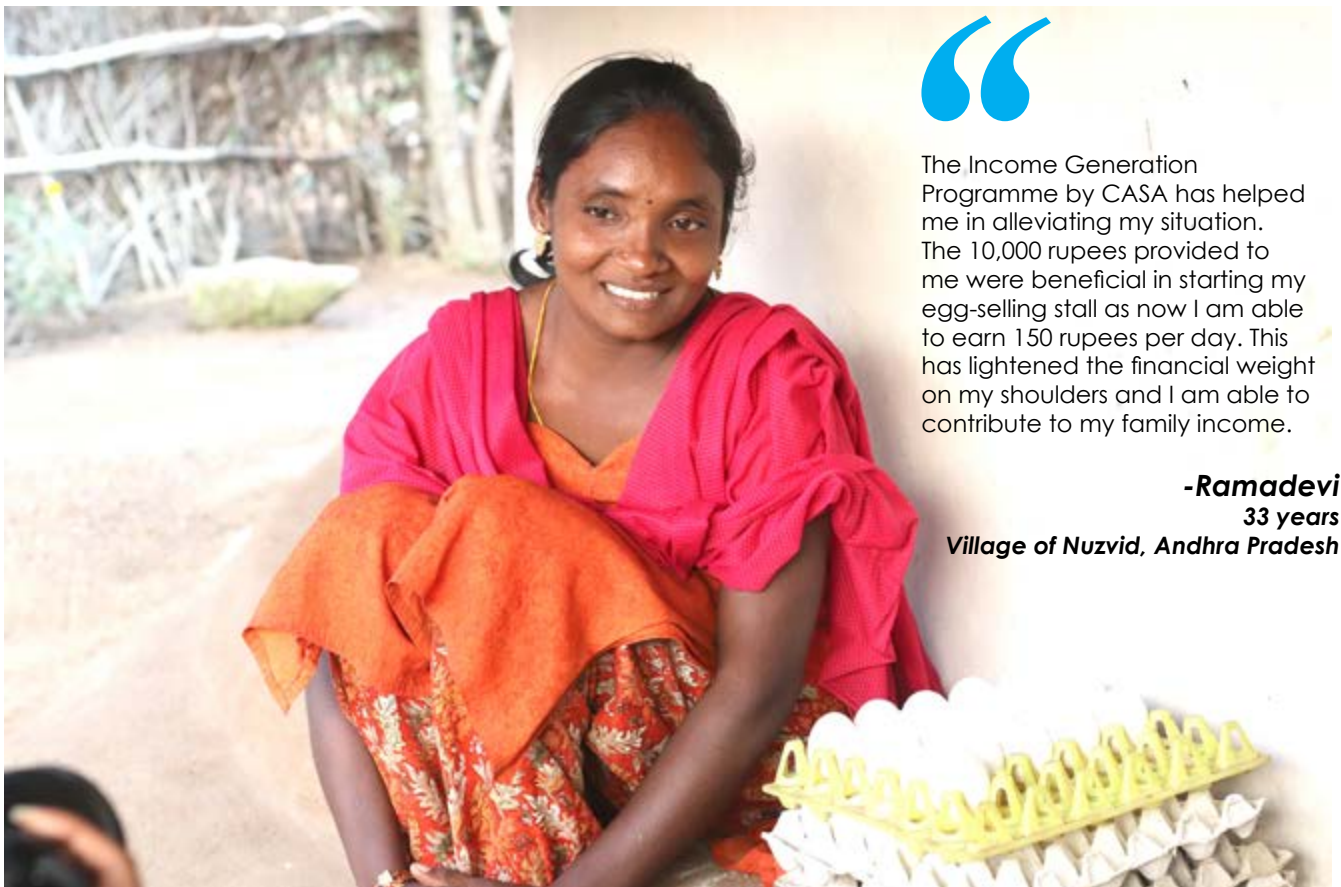


“

My husband passed away years ago and I was left with four children to look after single-handedly. My daughter had to drop out of school due to our financial condition. When I received CASA's support I was able to start my own pakoda (fritter) stall in my village. This assisted me in building a stable income and I was able to resume my daughter's education.

**-Phulma Ma**  
42 years

**Village of Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh**



“

The Income Generation Programme by CASA has helped me in alleviating my situation. The 10,000 rupees provided to me were beneficial in starting my egg-selling stall as now I am able to earn 150 rupees per day. This has lightened the financial weight on my shoulders and I am able to contribute to my family income.

**-Ramadevi**  
33 years

**Village of Nuzvid, Andhra Pradesh**

# THE PANDEMIC AND CHILD LABOUR

The battle against social inequities has never been easy. It has taken decades of integrated moral and social efforts to fight against the evil of child labour. While CASA's CLFZ project has been striving to liberate the tender hands from the cuffs of child labour, the crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic now potentially threatens to reverse every effort.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a deteriorating halt in the economic activities around the globe. Many fallouts such as loss of employment, interruption in supply chains, and the constrained budgets have exalted the pre-existing anxiety in financially disadvantaged families. Such anxiety can possibly intensify their desperation in expecting children to compensate for the economic deficiencies by engaging in labour. On the other hand, the employment of children in unorganised sectors is not only encouraged by the penny-pinching intentions of contractors, but it also perpetuates unhindered due to the community's compulsion, marginalisation, unawareness, oppression and lack of financial security.

The practice of child labour severely hampers the mental health of a child by restricting him/her to the informal workplace and an economically distressed household, neither of which is nurturing. Not only does child labour interfere with the physical, social and psychological development of the children, but it also traps them in the vicious cycle of poverty and daily struggles for bread.

However, with rescue operations over the past two decades, CASA was able to enrol several child labourers into the Bridge Course Centre to help them catch up with their studies. Education is the best mean for children to achieve a secured future and promote community awareness. But with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown imposed, it became increasingly difficult to impart education to the children lacking access to smartphones or stable electricity supply.

The educational institutions found it increasingly challenging to make the online classes an inclusive system. While the children from comparatively wealthier sections were affected by the halt in their education, the children who have been the victims of child labour in the past, faced a multilayered threat. With the discontinuation in education, there is also a huge risk of their falling back to the practices of labour.

CASA's objective has never remained limited to only rescuing the child labourers. Securing their childhood by education, skill training, financial aids and moral support has been carried out with the aim to prevent them from returning to the practice again. Since the beginning of



the lockdown, our volunteers in the Child Labour Free Zone Project areas, have actively engaged in tracking the education and health security of the children enrolled in our Bridge course centres.

Gradually with the national-unlock process, we have rolled our sleeves up to open the Bridge Course Centres in two batches and recover the interruption brought to their flow of education. The two batches will be functional in the morning and the evening to continue the curriculum more extensively than before. The risk of an increase in child labour, in the post-pandemic world, has become more challenging. While we are aware of the unexpected halt brought to the education of these children, our primary concerns lay with ensuring that our efforts are not reversed.

Additionally, the economic repercussions of the pandemic can intensify the exploitation of vulnerable children, besides aggravating the existing scenario of labour. With education, social security and financial aid to the families of the child labourers, it is possible to bring a positive change in their lives.



By Kajol Tanaya  
Intern - Communications



**WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF STORYTELLING TO BRING CHANGE**

First in any charity organisation