

Hussain

Hussain found support from his Chauraha mentor and peers, and negotiated with his father to stop working on the power loom and go to school



The Situation

According to the 2011 UNICEF report on the Situation of Children in India, about 28 million children aged 5-14 years are engaged in work. Many are trapped in some of the worst forms of child labour: work in hazardous environments like garbage dumping grounds, power looms and brick kilns, illegal activities, and bonded labour. This not only deprives them of an education and the chances of gainful employment as adults, but perpetuates the cycle of poverty. It also forces children to shoulder the burden of an adult's responsibilities and increases vulnerability to violence and abuse.

The Solution

Aangan's *Chauraha* programme works with adolescent boys in dangerous situations, like hazardous working environments, violence and abuse. By creating community support systems, and supporting and mentoring them through individual and group life skills training, they are empowered to plan for a safer future.

13-year-old Hussain is from a community in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, and has never been to school. Instead, like most of the adolescent boys from his community, Hussain has worked on the power loom for the past four years.

The Rs. 50 Hussain earns every week contributes to his family's income. But the work is hard and monotonous, with boys working 14-18 hours every day. The power loom is extremely noisy, and there is also a high risk of injuries, making it a hazardous work environment. Some of the boys Aangan has worked with through the Chauraha program have spoken about how they want to run away, or even commit suicide to escape working on the loom.

Hussain has always wanted to go to school and study, but his parents needed him to contribute to the family's finances. If he worked, he could marry and support his own household. In the face of his father's diktat, he suppressed his wishes.

A few months ago, encouraged by an older peer, Hussain joined the Chauraha program for adolescent boys. He started attending group sessions, where he began learning how to identify risk, articulate his aspirations, and make plans for the future.

Encouraged by his mentor, Hussain expressed his desire to go to school and study instead of working. The Aangan facilitator and Hussain met the latter's father and discussed the importance of educating his son. They explained how going to school and studying would give Hussain a chance at making a better future for himself, and he would have better employment opportunities and prospects when he becomes an adult.

At first, Hussain's father refused to consider sending his son to school. But he was slowly convinced of the advantages of an education, and saw how much Hussain wanted to study. He finally agreed to send his son to school.

Hussain has been linked to the local school, where the principal has agreed to give him admission for a bridge course. Hussain attends Chauraha sessions, where he is working with his mentor to create a life plan for his future and work towards his goals.