

**VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS OF THE CHILD RAGPICKERS  
AT MAKALTALA AND MATHPUKUR**

*Under Ward No. 57& 58 of Kolkata Municipal Corporation*

**A STUDY**



***Conducted by:***

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***Supported by***

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**March 2008**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

<b>CP</b>	<b>Coated Polyethylene</b>
<b>CPC</b>	<b>Child Protection Committee</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on Rights of Child</b>
<b>DAS</b>	<b>Development Action Society</b>
<b>FGD</b>	<b>Focus Group Discussion</b>
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	<b>Human Immuno-deficiency Virus Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome</b>
<b>ID</b>	<b>Infectious Disease Hospital</b>
<b>KMC</b>	<b>Kolkata Municipal Corporation</b>
<b>NRS</b>	<b>Nil Rattan Sircar Hospital</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Government Organization</b>
<b>OBC</b>	<b>Other Backward Class</b>
<b>PVC</b>	<b>Polyvinyl Chloride</b>
<b>SC</b>	<b>Scheduled Caste</b>
<b>TV</b>	<b>Television</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nation</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Program</b>

## I INTRODUCTION

India has more children than any other country in the world and is committed to ensure the basic rights of the children as a signatory nation of the UN Child Rights Convention (1989). Yet the country is the home to 12.6 million child labourers as per the 2001 Census. They are subjected to various violations of rights and deprivations and are often victims of exploitation, abuse, lack of access to basic facilities like education, health and recreation. Dr. Mitesh V. Badiwala in his report on 'Child Labour in India: Causes, Governmental Policies and the role of Education' says that "India is the largest example of a nation plagued by the problem of child labour. Estimates cite figures between 60 and 115 million working children in India -- the highest number in the world (Human Rights Watch 1996, 1)".

Although disparity has been noticed among the figures of various organizations related to the number of child labors in India, the Child Economic Activity Rate 1980-1991 (International Labour Organization, 1995, 113) was significantly high: 13.5% for males and 10.3% for females. Other developing countries such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia have lower activity rates: 5.3% for males and 4.6% for females in Sri Lanka, and 8.8% for males and 6.5% for females in Malaysia (International Labour Organization, 1995, 113).

The majority of rural child workers are employed in cultivation and agricultural labour while urban child labourers are involved in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs and other services. Children under fourteen constitute around 3.6% of the total labor force in India. Of these children, nine out of every ten work in their own rural family settings. Nearly 85% are engaged in traditional agricultural activities. Less than 9% work in manufacturing, services and repairs. Only about 0.8% works in factories. Among the various forms of child labour that exists in our country Rag picking is perhaps the worst forms of child labour particularly in the urban areas and in its periphery. It has been identified as one of the hazardous occupations that children are engaged into, under the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986 (as amended in 2006).

Kolkata is home to several migrant families from the neighboring districts and states and they now reside in cramped slums and squatter colonies in various parts of the city including Dhapa. Dhapa being the dumping ground of the city for several years is a fertile ground for the rag pickers, especially children. These children start rag picking at the age of 5 to 6 years. The children pick up harmful waste products causing health hazards and also depriving them of their basic rights to grow and develop. Most of these children have never been to school or are school drop outs.

## **II PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

**Development Action Society (DAS)**, a non government organization, has been working in the city of Kolkata and is committed to the cause of ensuring holistic development of under privileged women and children since 1989. They have concentrated their work in the south and south eastern parts of the city including the dumping area around the Eastern Metropolitan By pass (Dhapa). Owing to the gross violation of rights of the children especially amongst the rag pickers in the region, DAS directly intervened in Makaltala area of KMC ward 57 by empowering the children and the local community including education and counseling with support from Save the Children Fund.

In Kolkata rag pickers mostly live either in slums, squatters, on footpaths or areas close to the solid waste dumping ground, Dhapa. Their access to basic amenities is poor, and few essential services are provided to them. After a year's intervention in Makaltala area by DAS, it became imperative to have an objective understanding of the situation and the lives of the children in the area especially the ones engaged in rag picking. Therefore this study is intended to understand the nature and vulnerabilities of the rag picking children in Makaltala and in the adjoining area of Mathpukur with the objective of strategizing effectively to combat the issue of child labour in one of its worst forms.

The study also intends to understand the various issues related to rag picking with special focus on the children and hazards and vulnerabilities faced by them.

## **III OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To understand the nature or extent of deprivations of the children engaged in rag picking
- To comprehend the process of rag-picking and the role of various stakeholders in the process.
- To assess the impact created by the ongoing interventions of development action society
- To have inputs for the future strategy building towards effectively reaching out to the child rag pickers in the area

## **IV RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1 Study Design**

The qualitative study was undertaken in the targeted areas through structured personal interviews with children engaged in rag picking and their parents to

understand the area of vulnerability, their social problems, rights and their access to basic facilities. Discussions were also held with other stakeholders including local youths, middle men and community volunteers/ school teachers to elucidate the socio-economic profile of the rag pickers, their working conditions and their residential area.

## 1.2 Area Covered Under the Study

**Makaltala** having 50 families in KMC ward no. 57

**Mathpukur** having 190 families approximately located in KMC ward no. 58

## 1.3 Sample Size

The sample size selected for personal interviews through random purposive sampling method:

- Children in the age group of 5-16 years: 81 children (20% of the child population proportionately in the two targeted areas: 30 children in Makaltala and 50 children in Mathpukur)
- Parents: 39 (15 parents in Makaltala and 24 parents in Mathpukur)
- Other stakeholders: Need based and as per availability
- *Raddiwallas* (waste dealers): 10-15 (depending on availability)

## 1.4 Preparation and Finalization of Tool

After continuous brain storming and visiting the targeted areas, a structured format for the interview of the child rag pickers and their parents was designed. Interviews with the children and parents were done with close ended structured formats which were finalized with DAS and then piloted before starting the survey. Semi structured interview formats were used to interview the *raddiwallas* (waste dealers), to whom the rag pickers sell their materials. In order to gather additional information two FGDs were conducted based on certain pointers relevant to the study (one at Makaltala, with the children of Child Protection Committee and the other at Mathpukur with multi-stakeholders). Observations through field visits were also done for understanding the situation and context.

## 1.5 Orientation of the Surveyors

Following the finalization of the structured interview format, surveyors were selected on basis of their experience in the field of research and exposure in child rights activities and child labour projects. They were oriented on the interview format, locations, objective of the study and the steps to be followed during data collection so that correct information is gathered.

## 1.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The quantitative data was collected over a period of two weeks first at Makaltala and then at Mathpukur. After the data were collected it was verified by the seniors of Kolkata Konsultants for reliability and authenticity of information. The quantitative data gathered from the field was entered for statistical representation of the findings based on the objectives.

## **1.7 Documentation**

The report was compiled based on the analysis of the data/information collected through the various tools designed for the purpose of the study. It identified good practices, strengths and stumbling blocks and further provided recommendations for its future implementation of the programme.

## **V MAJOR FINDINGS**

In his book *Rag-pickers in India*, Mr K.L. Kamat says that as in most of the states in India anti-begging laws have been enforced and hence traditional beggars have opted for rag-picking. Most of the rag-pickers are extremely poor, illiterate, and belong to rural immigrant families. Many commence their profession at the young age of five to eight years. Most of them have never attended any school nor have any formal education. Most of their families are in need of extra incomes from these young children. During collection of rags they are subjected to chemical poisons and infections. The rag pickers are very susceptible to various diseases due to their exposure to hazardous materials.

The findings of the study are largely categorized in two sections, the first reflects upon the vulnerability of the targeted communities and the second phase will reflect upon the findings from the primary data collection and analysis of the views as expressed by the respondent children during in-depth discussion and structured interview.

### **2.1 Area Vulnerability**

As per the *Human Development Report*, 1996 of UNDP the growth rate of urban Indian population is 1.1 percent per year, which means that every year the population of Indian cities increases by 2.6 million. The UNDP estimates that by 2000, 29 percent of India's population will be staying in urban areas i.e. more than 261 million people. A major factor that contributes to rapid urbanization is the increased migration from rural areas to India's urban areas. Many of these migrants are landless agricultural laborers whose traditional occupations no longer exist or do not provide sufficient income, and who have come to the cities in search of employment and better livelihood. Large-scale migration of families from rural to urban areas has resulted in severe overcrowding, degrading work conditions, homelessness, deprivation of basic services and appalling living conditions in the city. The severe economic hardships faced by these families



have subsequently resulted into the increase in the number of child labourers, whose earnings are often of massive support for these families. As more and more the children face economic hardship, greater is the intensity of child labourers to engage themselves in various occupation available, including rag-picking, which has been described as "decadent social practices like scavenging..." by the Indian Government.

Both the targeted areas are the dumping grounds of the city solid waste. Makaltala is a small settlement just adjoining to the designated current dumping ground, Dhapa, by the State Government, in the eastern fringes of Kolkata under ward number 57 of KMC. The settlement at Mathpukur is on top of the garbage heap which used to be the dumping ground of the city way back in the 1960s and '70s. Dumping of the city solid waste stopped almost 20 to 25 years back in Mathpukur area. In ward number 58 of KMC this settlement is a squatter and always lives in a threat of being evicted.

### 2.1.1 Google Earth Image of Makaltala and Mathpukur



### 2.1.2 Area Profile

	<b>Makaltala</b>	<b>Mathpukur</b>
<b>Population</b>	407 (approx)	1750 (aprox)
<b>Location and surrounding area</b>	<p>This settlement is just adjacent the Dhapa dumping ground about 6 to 7 kilometers down east of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass.</p> <p>A narrow kutchra road around the Dhapa heap goes slightly uphill to reach the community across a broken wooden bridge over a highly silted drainage canal.</p> <p>As the settlement is adjacent to the Dhapa heap it has a constant foul smell and in addition there is a crematorium just beside the settlement which spreads equally foul odor, when in use, due to technical malfunction.</p>	<p>Mathpukur is to the west of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass about 1.5 kilometers from it on the Dhapa Main Road.</p> <p>The area surrounding the Mathpukur is mostly dominated by the communities who are involved in scavenging work. The approach road to the settlement leads through the staff quarters of KMC workers involved in cleaning, collection and disposal of solid waste.</p> <p>The area is mostly full of over poring heaps of materials collected by the rag-pickers, their family members or purchased by the raddiwalls.</p>
<b>Nature of Population and Livelihood Pattern</b>	<p>100 percent of the population is Hindu belonging to SC and OBC category.</p> <p>They are the local people and have lived here for generations.</p> <p>The male members of the community mostly work in the nearby agricultural fields as agriculture labourers. Some even have their own field also. Some of them work as daily labours. They only go to the dumping ground for rag-picking when some good quantity of metals is available that too the young boys only not the adults.</p> <p>Almost all the Girls and adult female members of the family are into rag-picking.</p>	<p>97 percent of the population is Hindu and about 3 percent are Christian. It's a mixed community where people from different areas, nearby districts stay. They belong to SC or OBC category.</p> <p>About 15% people are local, but rest 85% people of this area have come from Ghatakpukur, Sarberia, Sundarban, Murshidabad, Bihar, Katwa, etc.</p> <p>The male members of the community are involved mostly into rag-picking. Some are raddiwalls, daily wage earners, workers of municipal corporation, etc.</p> <p>The women too of this community go for rag-picking while few work as domestic helps. Almost all the children are rag-pickers.</p>

<p><b>Status of the Settlement and the household structures</b></p>	<p>It's an old settlement dating back to post independence. The residents of this community are legal title holders of their land.</p> <p>At Makaltala the settlement has more of a rural feature with semi-<i>kutccha</i> hutments. Most of the houses have brick cement wall with tali roof. The houses also have garden and courtyards attached with it.</p>	<p>It is a squatter settlement and the land belongs to Kolkata Municipal Corporation.</p> <p>It's an extremely congested settlement with the houses arranged in rows facing each other. The houses are <i>kutccha</i> structures made with bamboo mat walls and tali roof and few with structures of brick cement walls and tali roof. The area is clumsy and untidy with hardly any proper approach roads to each hutment.</p>
<p><b>Infrastructure Availability</b></p>	<p>All the <b>internal pathways</b> and even the approach road is <i>kutccha</i>.</p> <p>There are four hand pumps within the community, out of which one is non-functional; it is the main <b>source of water</b> for the community. The quality of water is not so good and has smell. There is often a red sedimentation of iron if kept for sometime. As there is no other alternative and the settlement is in remote area people are often forced to use this water. Sometimes they fetch drinking water from the checkpost* which is a minimum 15 minutes walk (one way) from the community.</p> <p>Till date no arrangements for <b>electricity connections</b> have been made. Only after the intervention of DAS very few arrangements of solar lights have been made available. Many a times the residents of this area have been cheated by employees of different electric supply offices, who have taken money from these innocent people with false promise of connection.</p> <p>A negligible percentage of households at Makaltala has <b>sanitation</b> facilities (2 to 3 families). Open defecation is</p>	<p>All <b>internal pathways</b> of the settlement are <i>kutccha</i> (mudy), except for the main approach road.</p> <p>Though the community has corporation <b>water</b> connection through three or four stand post, the quality of water is too poor for drinking purpose. Portable drinking water is fetched by the people from a distance which is far from the community. Those who can afford they buy water at Rs 10 per container holding 50 lits of water. Very recently government has installed one deep tube well near the community; the water quality of it is also not good.</p> <p>Few households in the community have metered <b>electricity connection</b>. Though apparently it appears that all the households have electricity connection, most of them are either hooked or connection taken on point basis from those households who have metered connection.</p> <p>Many of the households in the community has their own <b>sanitations</b> which were build by KMDA with a minimum contribution of Rs 300 per family. This arrangement is often shared by tenants along</p>

	the common practice among the community people.	with the landlords or by other extended family members who live nearby. Apart from this there is a public toilet adjacent to the community built by KMC, which is mostly used by the men.
<b>Access to Education</b>	<p>The children of Makaltala have no access to formal education due to the distance of the institutions from the settlement.</p> <p>Captain Bheri Primary School is one hour walk and the Sukanta Nagar High School is about one hour fifteen minutes walking from the community.</p> <p>The non-formal Shikshalaya education center run by DAS is the only ray of hope for knowledge for the children of this community.</p>	<p>Mathpukur is within the locality and hence has better access to different facilities.</p> <p>There is a primary school near the community run by Christian Missionaries. But the children do not like to go there as no mid day meal is served there. Secondary schools situated near around this locality are Santi Sangha Kishore Vidyapith, Janakalyan School and Samaj Kalyan School. But maximum of the children of this community do not study.</p>
<b>Access to Health Facilities</b>	<p>People of Makaltala generally take support of quacks and sorcerers for any minor health problem as government health support system is not available near to the community.</p> <p>The nearest government hospital is ID Hospital or NRS Hospital where the patients are taken during emergency. These hospitals are about 15 kilometers approximately from the settlement.</p> <p>DAS has currently arranged for a health clinic once in a week where a professional doctor visits and medicines are given to the patients.</p>	<p>There are few quack doctors within the community who are consulted at times of acute need or immediate need, but by a small portion of the members of the community. Also they charge a fee that is affordable by the people.</p> <p>But most of the people visit the free clinic held once in a week at the primary school run by the Christian Missionaries. Medicines for nominal ailments are distributed free of cost from this clinic.</p> <p>Apart from this people visit the ID Hospital, NRS hospital and the TB hospital, which are well within the radius of 5 to 7 kilometers of the community, for major health problems.</p>
<b>Average Family Income</b>	Rs 2800 per month	Rs 2300 per month
<b>Other Vulnerabilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The garbage dumped in the area is biodegradable in nature as a result Methane and Hydrogen gas, both of which are highly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drug addiction, alcoholism and gambling is a full time recreation in the community.</li> <li>The growing number of broken families and</li> </ul>

	<p>combustible and inflammable in nature, are the major byproducts of the reactions between the energy of the sun and the waste. It causes undetectable fires below the surface and sometimes huge masses caving in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addiction is another major issue prevailing in the area common to both adults and young boys.</li><li>• The area lacks playground or any other proper healthy means of entertainment.</li><li>• Girls marry at an early age.</li></ul>	<p>single parent families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children are insecure and are very vulnerable to abuse.</li><li>• Most of the young boys are addicted to Gutka, Shikhar, country liquor.</li></ul>
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\* Approach to Makaltala is through a checkpost of KMC where every truck entering to dump garbage is weighed and its number registered before and after leaving the dumping area. Usually a restricted area for common people.



## 2.2 Detailed Analysis

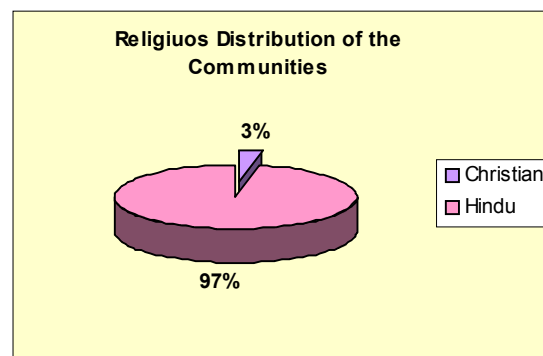
In the context of the vulnerabilities of the communities the further analysis would highlight the findings from the primary data collection after interviewing 81 children and 35 parents as respondents of the above mentioned communities. The focus of the analysis would be to elucidate background of the rag-pickers, their problems related to working conditions, their information related to family, education, occupation, income, health and their expectations.

### 2.2.1 Respondent Profile

The **children** are the key respondents of the study as the main focus of the study has been to analyze the key vulnerabilities of these young rag-pickers who enter this occupation as early as 5 to 6 years. The gender segregation reveals that 56 percent of the respondent children are boys and 44 percent are girls. The children between the age group 6 to 17 years are into this occupation.

Figure 1

The **parents** play an important role for determining the future of their children. 39 parents were interviewed. The age of the mothers ranged between 19 to 46 years with mean age 31 years and the fathers age ranged between 25 to 50 years with mean age 39 years. The study revealed that both the communities are Hindu dominated.



### 2.2.2 Background of the Respondents

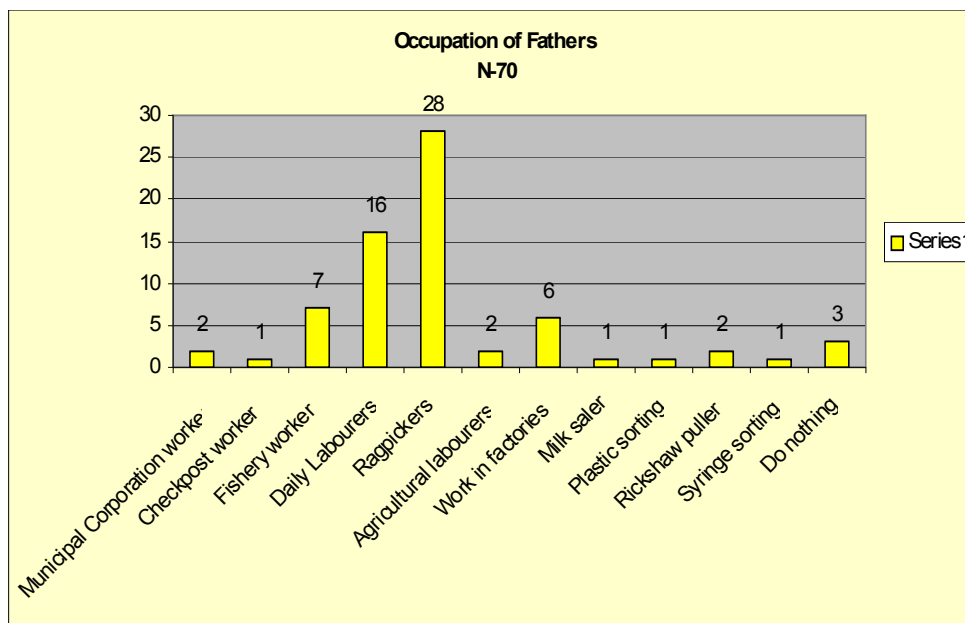
To understand the various dynamics of the study it is important to understand the background of the respondents. The background analysis includes mainly the occupation of both the parents of the child rag-pickers, the family size and the involvement of their other siblings into work. The study reveals that 35 percent fathers and 46 percent mothers are into rag-picking. Almost 20 percent of the fathers earn their living as daily labourers. Strikingly, 14 percent children are looked after by single mothers, as either their father left them or have died. Figure 2 gives a clear representation of the occupation of the fathers (14 percent who have left or died is not included in the table).

46 percent of the mothers are into rag-picking while 12 percent work as domestic helps. Some of the mothers work in hotels or as vegetable vendors. Almost 21 percent of the mothers prefer to stay at home and look after their families.

Approximately 3 percent of them have left the families and the children are left to be taken care off by their fathers (this 3 percent is not included in the table 3).

In Makaltala the adult male members of the families either work as agricultural labour or they work in the nearby fisheries. It is an old settlement where agriculture was the main source of livelihood and have prevailed for generation and hence the male members work in agricultural fields. The females started collecting rags along with the children after the area was designated by the government for dumping of solid waste of the city, in order to add an extra income to the family.

**Figure 2**

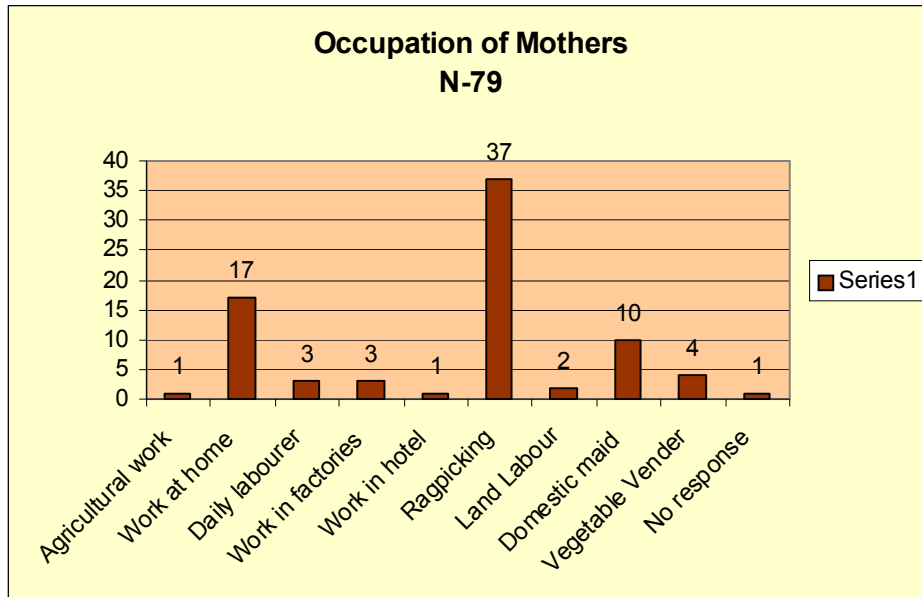


Mathpukur, a mixed community, where people from different places came in search of livelihood, are into various types of work. Predominantly into rag-picking, they even do odd jobs related to recycling process. Some of them are daily wage earners, Municipal Corporation workers involved in scavenging or work as factory labourers, etc. The women of this community are also into rag-picking and goes to Dhapa for collecting materials. Women working as domestic helps are common to this community.

*Gauri Mondal is a single mother. Her husband left when her elder daughter was 10 years old, second daughter was 8 years old and the third one barely could talk. She took refuge at her parental home. She goes to Dhapa for rag-picking and works for almost twelve hours a day. She is the sole earner of a family of five members and finds extreme difficulty to meet ends. Her two elder daughters are into teens and she finds it unsafe to send them out working. She could never send her daughters to school and is now worried about their marriage. She says, “we have lived through poverty and we will die poor”. Each passing day is a challenge for them.*



**Figure 3**



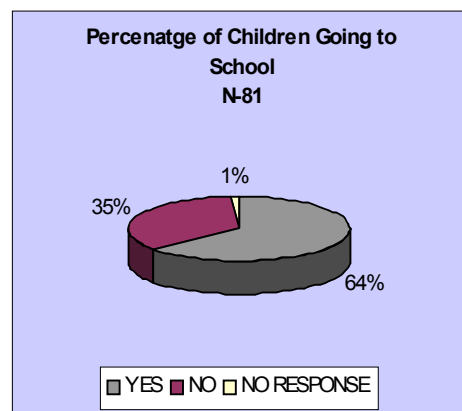
79 percent of the families have 2 to 3 children which brings to light the effect of the family planning programme undertaken by the government. It implicates that people have become well aware of the measures and benefits of family planning.

The economic condition of the families demands more working hands and hence it has been analyzed that 42 percent of the brothers and sisters of the respondent children are also engaged either in rag-picking or any work related to recycling or other jobs.

### 2.2.3 Status of Education

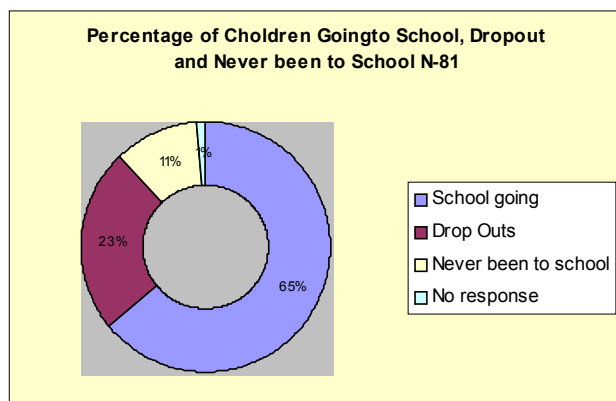
**Figure 4**

The children covered under this study are mostly first generation learners. Although the scope of going to school is high at Mathpukur, Makaltala has no government educational institution near the settlement. 64 percent (Figure 4) of the children answered positively when asked whether they go to school. Though the rate of children not going to school is low the percentage is quite high lending an



alarming threat to the dream of Universalisation of Education of

**Figure 5**



all children as per Article 21, 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Constitution. 35 percent of children answered in the negatively, out of which 11 percent had never been to school and 23 percent have dropped out (Figure 5). Out of 35 respondents 72 percent of the parents said that they send their children to school.

The data reveals that out of the 52 children who go to school, they mostly study in class I and II (Table1). The decreasing number of children with the growing classes can be explained by the fact that several children dropout of school owing to financial problems, lack of motivation to go to school or due to the scope of earning easy money by rag-picking.

**Table 1 Gradation of School Going Children under the Study**

Grade	Number of Children	Percentage (%)
I	26	50.00
II	10	19.23
III	5	9.62
IV	2	3.85
V	6	11.54
VI	2	3.85
VII	1	1.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

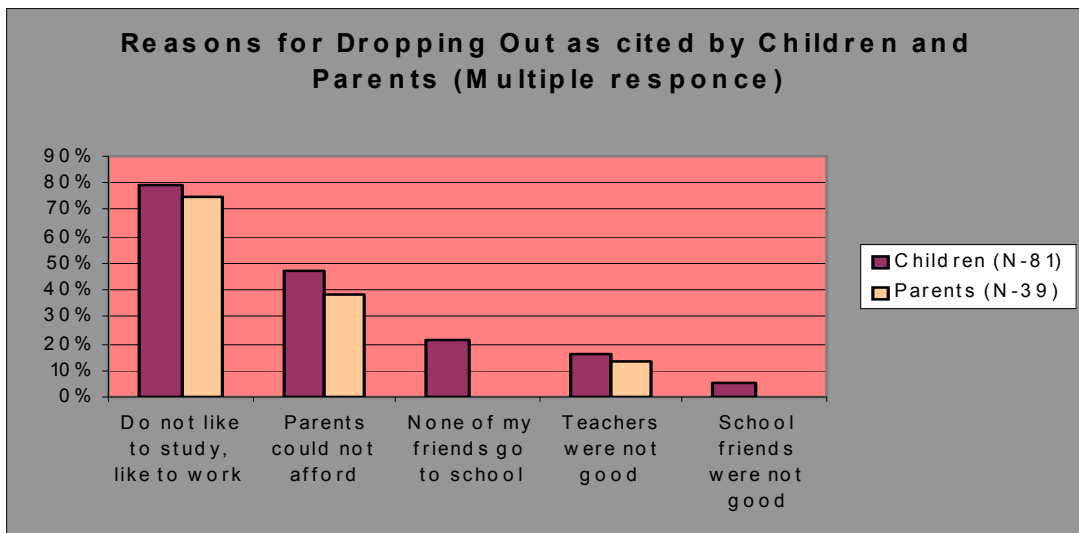
79 percent of the children stated that they like to work and do not like to study; they can earn money easily by working. This is one of the prime reasons for children dropping out; even the parents cited the same reason. According

to them 75 percent of the children drop out as they do not like to study, they love working. 47 percent children stated that their parents cannot afford to bear the education cost and hence they had stopped going to school. This was supported by the parents and according to them 38 percent children dropout is due to their poor economic condition. The others reasons as cited by the children for dropping out are as: *'none of my friends go to school'*, *'teachers are not good, they scold'* and *'the friends in the school are not good'*. So the issues like children being bullied by fellow classmates or elder peer, absence of proper classroom environment and the lack of motivation often prevent them from continuing in school.

*Neha is second among her three sister siblings and is 11 years old. Her parents are very keen to get their children educated. Her mother says that they must read atleast upto Madhyamik. Both her elder and younger sister goes to CIDS, the school run by the missionaries. Her mother got her admitted to the school thrice and all the three times she dropped from school. Neha does not like studying instead she prefers to go rag-picking with her peers.*

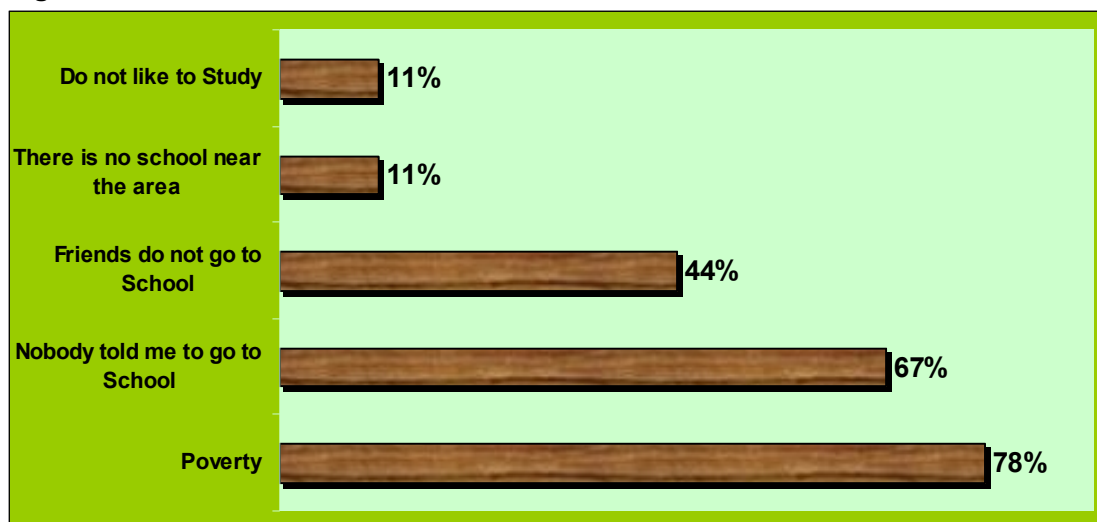
*Shankar is 13 years old. He used be regular in school once. He liked going to school as he had many friends. But he dropped out at class III. The teacher use to bit him whenever he could not deliver his studies. He could not prepare his studies as there was no one at home to give him back-up support; he was the first generation learner. So he left the school. He is still ready to go if the teachers do not bit him.*

**Figure 6**



Continuous efforts are made by both government and non-government organizations to bring all children between the age group of 5 to 14 years under the structure of formal education. Yet there are communities well in the heart of the city where 11 percent children had never been to school. Poverty, lack of motivation and lack of government educational infrastructure are the causes why children have never been admitted to school. 78 percent (Figure7) children have to work to support their family at an age when they should be attending schools. 67 percent of the children stated that they had never been asked to go to school which indicates that the awareness level among the parents in the community is too low.

**Figure 7 Reasons for Children Never been Admitted to School**



A detailed analysis of the data revealed a clear distinction between the two target areas; Makaltala with intervention of DAS and Mathpukur where no such interventions have taken place (Table 2). 90 percent of children between the age group of 6 to 17 years attend the non-formal school run by DAS. Whereas in Mathpukur, though there are a number of government and non-government schools in the locality, only 49 percent of the children go to school indicating lack of guiding and motivating hands behind the community. Percentage of school dropouts is also high in Mathpukur and it is the exclusivity of this particular area among the two that almost 18 percent of the children have never been to school.

**Table 2 Status of School Going Children**

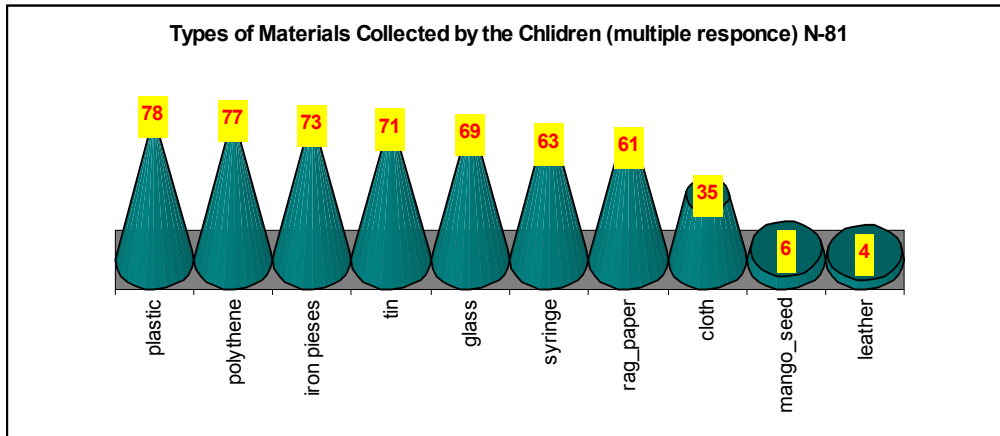
Response	Makaltala		Mathpukur		Total	
	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages
School going	27	90%	25	49%	52	64%
Drop Outs	3	10%	16	31%	19	24%
Never been to school			9	18%	9	11%
No response			1	2%	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 2.2.4 Occupation

An issue reflected again and again during the study was that, as the parents leave the children behind while they go out working, the children are drawn into this occupation of rag-picking following their friends or elder peers or siblings. They also work for their parents. **The study reveals that children as early as three years have started collecting materials.** Though the rate is negligible but the issue is alarming. During the focus group discussions the children mentioned that they start collecting the materials as soon as they are old enough to be able to identify the materials, which is usually from the age of 5 to 6 years with the

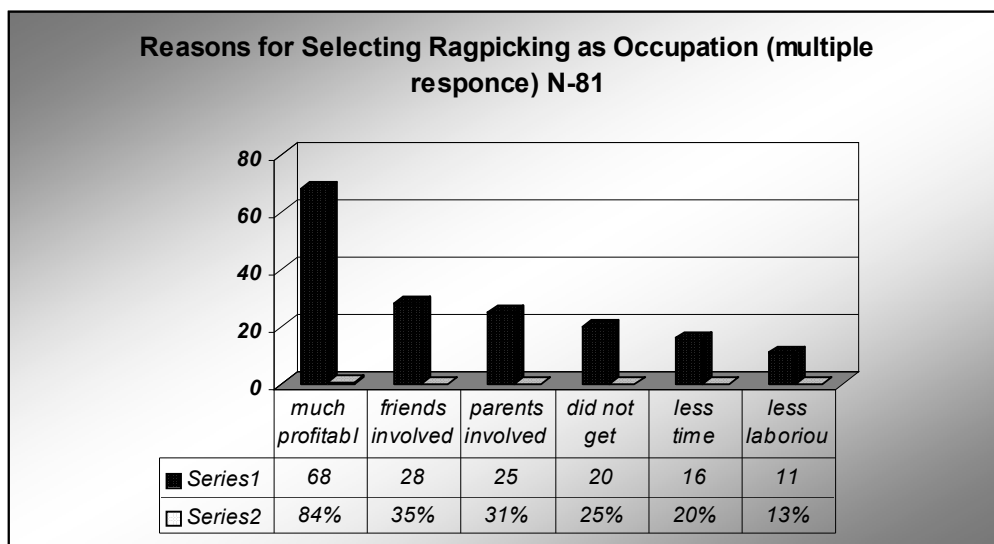
mean age 6.18 years. The rag-pickers collect all types of materials from paper, plastic, metals, rubber, leather to mango seeds.

**Figure 8**



Rag-picking is the easiest option as occupation assuming the nature of the area. Economically weak people migrate from the rural areas in search of livelihood, but getting jobs are becoming increasingly difficult with each passing day. Rag-picking is the easiest option with no investment but much commitment to support one's family. It is such an occupation where there is no gender disparity. Therefore the people of these two communities have readily taken up rag-picking as there is a lot of scope for it in the area. 84 percent (figure 9) of the children selected rag-picking as it is much profitable. It is an easy means of earning money for them. 35 percent stated that as their friends are involved they have also started by following them. The reasons as stated by the children for selecting this occupation is supported by the parents too. 77 percent of the parents said that

**Figure 9**



*Chintu is barely 3 1/2 years old. Both his father and mother go to Dhapa dumping ground early at six in the morning for collecting rags. Chintu is left behind to be looked after by his 8 year old elder brother. His elder brother goes rag-picking along with his friends and small Chintu follows him as there is no other option. He helps his brother in collecting materials, only plastic. Because that is the only object his small brain has recognized and light for his small hand to lift.*

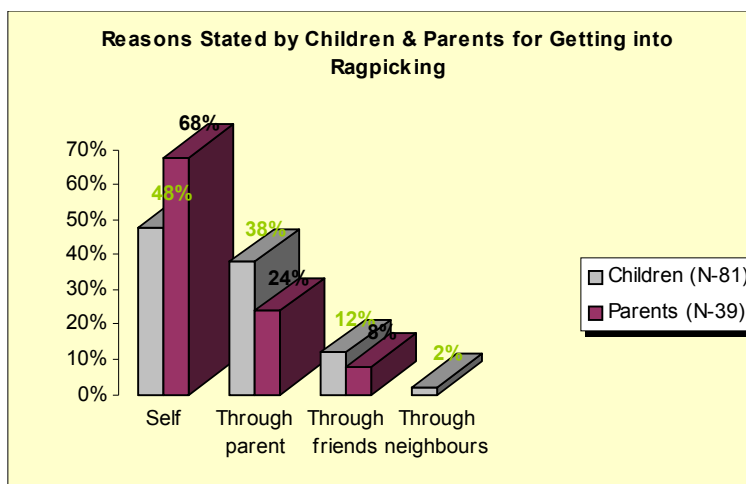
**Table 3**

Reasons for Selecting Rag-picking as Occupation by the children as cited by Parents (multiple response) N-39	
Reasons	Percentages (%)
Much profitable	77
Parents involved in rag-picking	46
Easily accessible	26
High frequency in the area	15

as it is much profitable they have selected this occupation, 26 percent cited easy accessibility and 15 percent (Table 3) as highly frequent to this area as reasons for selecting rag-picking as occupation by the children.

It is generally the self decision (48 percent) of the children to take up rag-picking as occupation as it is highly frequent to these areas and this is an easy source to earn money. They are able to spend money on their own for recreation and other purposes without being answerable to anyone. But 38 percent of the children work for their parents and 12 percent got into this occupation through their friends. 68 percent parents (Figure 10) mentioned that they want their children to study and go to school but the children go to work on their own. As the parents are out working almost the whole day, it is not always possible for them to follow-up whether the children go to work or play or to school.

**Figure 10**



Further analysis of the data reveals that the children of Makaltala got into this occupation through their parents. As the scope of work is less the children, especially the girls, accompany their mothers to the Dhapa for collecting

materials. 73 percent children (Table 4) at Makaltala work for their parents. While

at Mathpukur the scenario is different, the choice of work is solely the children’s decision. 67 percent of the children have been working on their own.

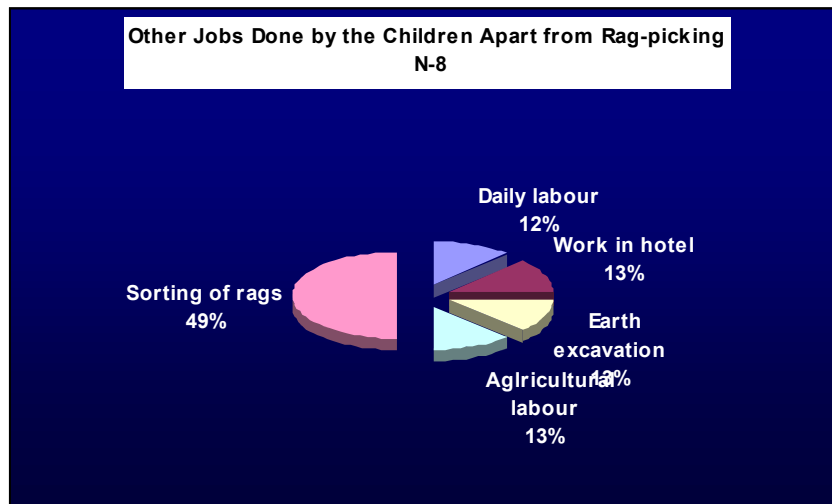
**Table 4 Children Getting into Rag-picking**

Response	Makaltala		Mathpukur		Total	
	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages
Self	5	17%	34	67%	39	48%
Through parent	22	73%	9	18%	31	38%
Through friends	2	7%	8	15%	10	12%
Through neighbours	1	3%			1	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>51</b>		<b>81</b>	

The children of Makaltala mainly work for their parents, but sometimes when they require some pocket money they sell the materials themselves and take the return. At Mathpukur the children collect and sell the materials themselves, as a result they are often cheated by the *raddiwallas* (waste dealers). 60 percent of the children collect the materials for their parents and about 42 percent for themselves.

About 10 percent of the children are involved in jobs other than rag-picking. They work in the agricultural fields, in hotels, as daily labours or sometimes for the *raddiwallas* for sorting things. The following (figure 11) describes the nature of work done by these children apart from rag-picking.

**Figure 11**



The children are involved into rag-picking for over a period of two to three years and above. Over the time they have gained experience and have learned to bargain their sale with the waste dealers. But poverty remains the prime cause for the children and their parents to start this particular occupation. 69 percent of

the children collect the rags from the dumping ground at Dhapa, while 54 percent (multiple responses) collect from the road side vats, housing complexes and other areas. The children of Makaltala pick rags only from Dhapa dumping ground.

The adult members of Mathpukur community, who are into rag-picking, go to the Dhapa dumping ground for collecting the rag materials. During the field visit it was observed that the female members goes to Dhapa in the morning, after

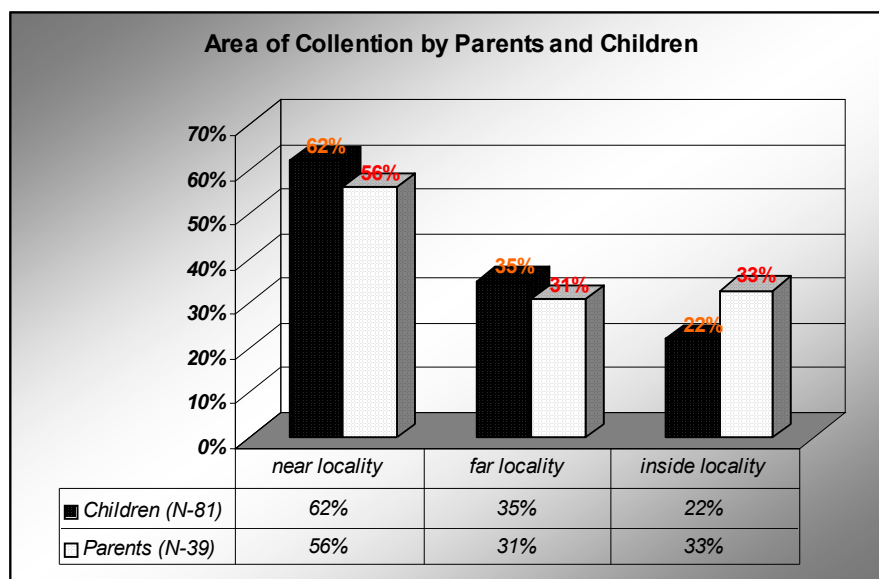
**Table 5 Children Spending Time for Rag Collection**

Hours	Number of Children	Percentage (%)
2 hours	23	28
4 hours	47	58
6 hours	8	10
8 hours	2	2
10 hours	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>

collecting materials for the whole morning they come back and sell the items to the waste dealers, have lunch and country liquor and again goes to Dhapa for second round of collection. They return by sunset and sell the materials. But the children of Mathpukur collect rags either from inside the locality or sometimes near it. At Makaltala the area of collection of rags is almost within the community, very near to the settlement (Figure 12).

58 percent of the children work for maximum 4 hours a day, 10 percent for 6 hours a day and 2 percent for 8 hours a day (Table 5). The adult rag-pickers work for almost 10 to 12 hours a day but this is exclusively for the adult members for Mathpukur. At Makaltala the adults work for maximum of 4 to 6 hours per day, dividing the time between morning and in the afternoon.

**Figure 12**





Though rare but some children are harassed by police on being suspected for stealing. This is one stigma that has always been part of this occupation of rag-picking that they are often designated as thieves and are caught by police. But this wasn't reported much during the study.

### 2.2.5 Information about Income

A variance is observed in income range of the children of Makaltala and Mathpukur. The reason might be credited to the cause that the parents of Makaltala take major initiative in selling the materials to the *raddiwallas* or waste dealers by bargaining the highest price they can get for each material. . The distance of the settlement from the place where the materials are sold to the *raddiwallas* is one of the prime reasons why the parents take more initiative.

Lack of parental guidance prevents the children from getting the proper price for the materials they sell in case of Mathpukur. In absence of guardians or parents during day the children sell their rags to the waste dealers on their own, and hence they fail to get proper price for each material. The *raddiwallas* sometimes even do not weigh the materials; they give a meager amount for the whole sack of materials to the children. But the frequency of selling the collected materials is more at Mathpukur than in Makaltala. The children of Mathpukur sell the collected materials almost everyday while the materials collected by the children of Makaltala are sold at an interval of 15 to 30 days. Hence the rolling of money is more at Mathpukur.

It is to be also noted that the children of Makaltala spend more time on studying and they spend less time on collection, while the children of Mathpukur hardly go to school and spends the major time in rag-picking. Though apparently it appears that the children of Makaltala earn more, it is 36 percent of the children (Table 6) of Mathpukur earn between rupees 901 to 1500 per month which is more in comparison to the monthly income of the children of Makaltala (14 percent). But on a consolidated basis the income of the Makalatal children is high.

**Table 6 Monthly Earning of the Children of Makaltala & Mathpukur**

Response	Makaltala		Mathpukur		Total	
	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages
Less than 300	7	23%	10	20%	17	21%
301-600	11	37%	7	14%	18	22%
601-900	5	17%	7	14%	12	15%
901-1200	2	7%	12	24%	14	17%
1201-1500	2	7%	6	12%	8	10%
1501 and above	3	10%	4	8%	7	9%
doesnot know			5	10%	5	6%
Total	30	100%	51	100%	81	100%

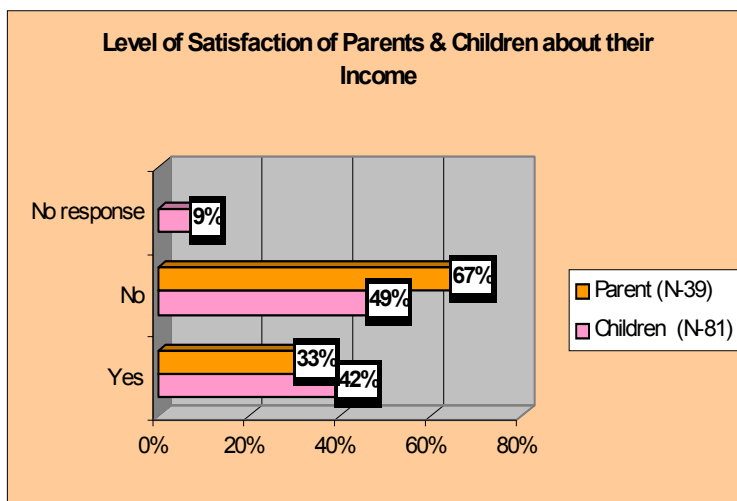
Monthly earning of the children ranges from less than rupees 300 to above rupees 1500 with median value 750. 66 percent rag-picker children of Mathpukur sell their materials daily, while 73 percent (Table 7) of the children of Makaltala sell their materials monthly through their parents or elder siblings. The parents of Mathpukur too, sell their materials daily,

**Table 7** Income Interval

Response	Makaltala		Mathpukur		Total	
	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages
Daily	1	3%	34	67%	35	43%
Weekly	5	17%	5	10%	10	12%
Fortnightly	2	7%	1	2%	3	4%
Monthly	22	73%	11	21%	33	41%
Total	30	100.00%	51	100.00%	81	100.00%

42 percent of the children said that they are satisfied with their income and 67 percent parents answered negatively. According to parents the waste dealers sell the materials at high rate to the reprocessors and pay less to them. Though 49 percent children said that they are not happy with their income, but they enjoy their economic independence. The children are happy with whatever they earn as they are able to spend the money on entertainment, eating food of their choice, buying things they like and sometimes on gambling and objects of addiction. *'We do not need to ask for money to our parents for going to watch a movie, we earn it ourselves'*, this was said by a twelve year boy of Mathpukur.

**Figure 13**



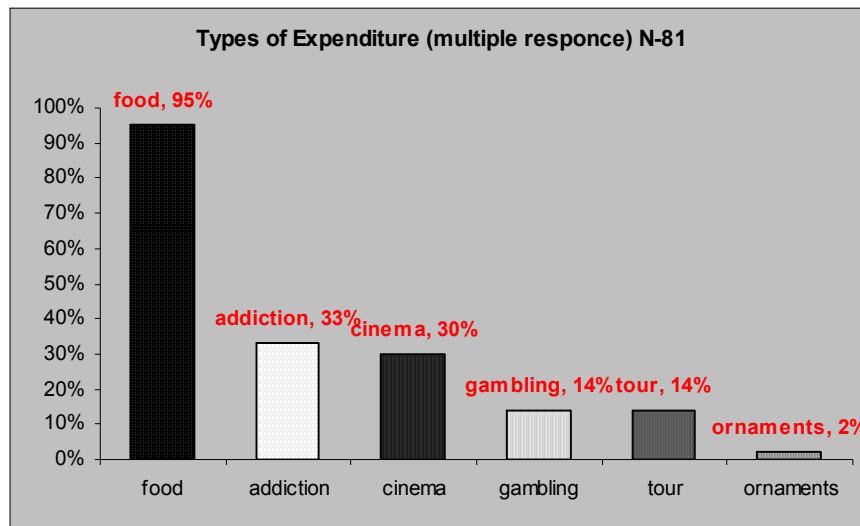
Data analysis reveals that 60 percent parents receive the income of their children. This frequency is high at Makaltala (Table 8) than Mathpukur. The children of Mathpukur are more economically independent. 90 percent of the children who get paid by the waste dealer directly contribute the entire sum or a portion of their income to the family.

**Table 8 Income Received by Parents or Children**

Response	Makaltala		Mathpukur		Total	
	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages	Count	Percentages
Directly	8	27%	24	47%	32	40%
Parents	22	73%	27	53%	49	60%
Total	30	100.00%	51	100.00%	81	100.00%

The parents can only manage two square meal a day, they are unable to provide tasty food which the children desire. So the money they earn is mostly spend on eating food of there choice (95 percent). The girls like to buy bangles, earrings and other imitation ornaments. The boys spend their income by watching cinemas, going about places far and near to fairs, relative’s house. Though not the highest, but a substantial percentage (33 percent) of boys is engaged in substance abuse addiction of *Gutka, Shikar, bidi, and cholai*, (country liquor). The respondent children are addicted to more than one form of addiction. They are even engaged into gambling (Figure 14).

**Figure 14**



**2.2.6 Environment of Working Place**

The work environment at Makaltala is extremely hazardous. The children go on top of the Dhapa heap, which is almost as high as a ten to fifteen floor high-rise building. It is a loose heap of solid waste of bio-degradable elements. Methane is

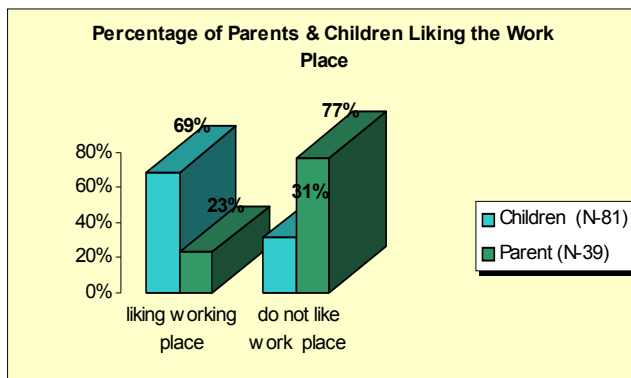
generated due to the reaction of these biodegradable elements with energy of sun; Methane being highly combustible and inflammable, catches fire fast. It was observed that the lower mass of the heap is always in flames. There are incidents when children gone for rag-picking have fallen into such flames and have been burnt alive.

As it is a loose heap of waste they sometimes fall down from a great height, often injuring themselves, as the waste slides down. There are instances when dumpers have unloaded the garbage heap on the rag-pickers without the knowledge of both the victim and the driver of the dumper as they are back to back of each other. The victims suffocate to death under the garbage heap.

However 69 percent children said that they like the place where they go for rag-picking as they get many materials from the place, selling they earn money. 31 percent children said they do not like the place as it is extremely dirty and foul smelling. 77 percent parents said that they do not like the place where they go for rag-picking. Majority of the parents go rag-picking in the same area as of the children.



Figure 15



72 percent parents, who do not like the work place, felt that the place of work is unhealthy due to foul smell and 64 percent felt there are high chances of getting injured by sharp pointed metallic or glass objects. 51 percent of the parents felt that the place itself is unhealthy.

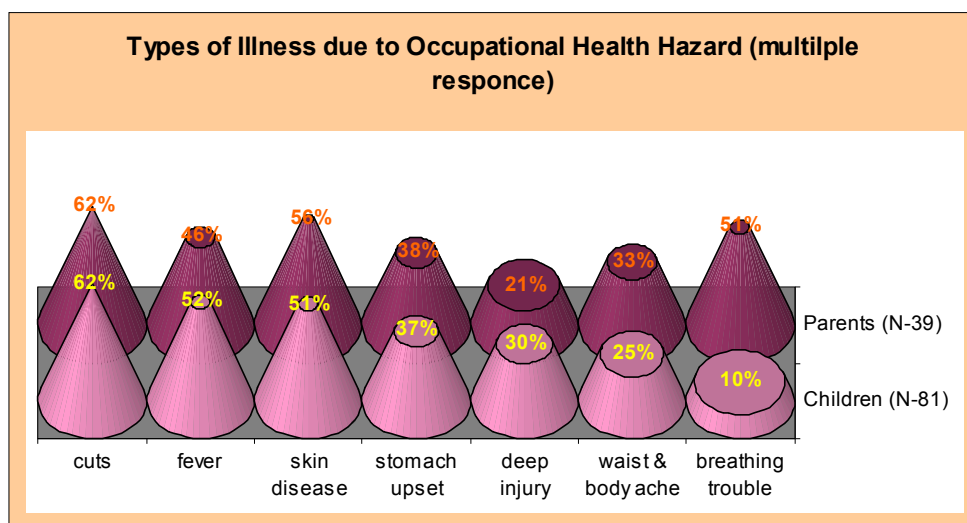
### 2.2.7 Status of Health

Health is an important indicator of the quality of life of the people living in the area. Cuts, burns, backaches, allergies, dog-bites, respiratory disorders, skin diseases are some of the common physical ailments of the rag-pickers. The occupational hazards of the rag-pickers arise from two aspects: one from poverty and the other is the occupation itself. Since the members of the community belong to the poorest of the poor section of the society under-nutrition, growth retardation, anemia, TB and other diseases are common among them. These make them more susceptible to occupational health hazards.

25 percent of the children complained of back or waist aches. Hunched over for hours for collecting and segregating materials and the sack full of materials on their back often lead to sever back aches felt by both the adult and children rag-pickers. Working in the dirty place cause skin diseases due to bacterial and fungal infection and even sometimes due to different chemical reactions. 51percent (Figure 16) children complained of skin diseases. Their work leads to deep cuts and bruises by broken glass pieces and sharp metal objects; 62 percent children have complained of cuts and injuries, some even bore the marks of deep injuries on their body. The parents too complained about the same trend of health hazards faced by the children rag-pickers and often themselves too. In search of waste the children visit places where they even get dog bites.

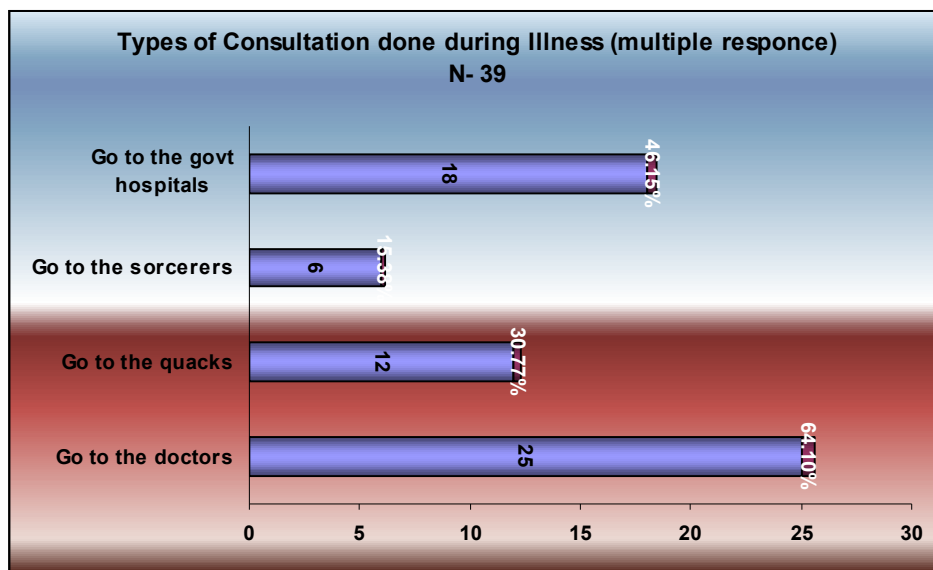
The factors that cause such health hazards as highlighted by the children and their parents are: they get covered by the rubbish during collection, get deep cut due to sharp pointed objects, suffocation due to pungent and choking smell and working in dirty and unhealthy area without any gadgets.

**Figure 16**



Lack of awareness and illiteracy takes people to sorcerers, though the percentage is less but the practice still prevails. 15 percent parents said that they take their children or themselves visit, when fall sick for minor ailments, to the sorcerer. Quacks in the locality are consulted by some parents and common medicines are purchased from local grocery shop. These shops generally keep ban medicines like entroquinol, etc.

**Figure 17**



**Table 9 Age at which Children take to Addiction**

Age	Count	Percentages
Below 8 years	21	53.85%
9 years	2	5.13%
10years	5	12.82%
14 years	2	5.13%
16 years	1	2.56%
No response	8	20.51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

As an alarming threat, 54 percent of the parents confirmed that children below 8 years take to various types of addiction. This might be the effect of following the elders of the community. During the multi-stakeholder FGD at Mathpukur it was

confirmed that almost 90 to 95 percent of the adults, especially the male are addicted to hard liquor. Table 9 indicates that the children take to different kinds of substance abuse at a very early age.

**2.2.8 Information Related to Child Rights**

The International Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) states, ‘the child by the reason of his physical and mental immaturity needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth’. Child

Rights seek to recognize the individuality and uniqueness of each child and respects their special needs. The CRC contains a set of international legal

**Table 10 Opinion of Parents Regarding the Entitlement of the Children**

provisions for the protection and well being of children in society. It believes in empowering children and creating an environment in which all children are able to live securely and realize their full potential.

Development Action Society (DAS), working in the targeted area of Makaltala for last few years, identified the issues pertaining to child protection in the community. To effectively address child protection issues in the community, the organization has formed child protection committee (CPC) with the local youths and adolescent children. Through different workshop and trainings the children are oriented on Child Rights issues so that they can influence and bring about change in mindset of the community people.

The awareness level regarding the CPC and child rights is only confined to the members of CPC. The children have become quite vocal and are able to clearly mention and talk on different issue pertaining to their rights. But none of the parents could mention about the CPC when asked to them during the study. No such intervention has taken place at Mathpukur.

Answers	Count	Percentages
Proper Education	39	100.00%
Recreation Facilities	37	94.87%
Healthy Food	22	56.41%
Clean Environment	3	7.69%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	

Though the children of Mathpukur are not aware of any issues related to child rights, 87 percent of them agreed that this not the appropriate age for them to work. The level of awareness among the parents of

Mathpukur, on child rights is nil. When asked, whether they have heard about the issues related to child rights, during the FGD, their answer was in negative. However, they all agreed that children of this age must play, go to school, get proper environment to grow and have sufficient food to eat.

All the parents agreed in a chorus that education is the prime activity of the children of this age. But as per them it is unfortunate that they are unable to send their children to school due to poverty.

**Table 11 Rights and Opportunities of Children as Highlighted by the Parents**



Answers	Count	Percentages
Access to Quality Education	39	100%
Play & have Access to Recreation	31	79%
Sufficient Nutritious Food	37	95%
Healthy Environment	26	67%
Access to Health Facility	11	28%
secured Family	6	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	

95 percent parents agreed that it is the right of the children to get sufficient nutritious food and cent percent agreed that children must have access to quality education (Table11). The community people mentioned that they know the

children must get such facilities but they are not aware that these are the rights of the children and how to apply them.

### 2.2.9 Early marriage and Other Vulnerabilities

Despite years of awareness by different agencies on various social evils and enforcement of constitutional acts to prevent it, socio-economically deprived communities have failed to bring into practice the social change related to these issues. One such issue is early marriage of children. Child marriage is a violation of human rights whether it happens to a girl or a boy but it represents perhaps the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls. The harmful consequences include separation from family and friend, lack of freedom to interact with peers and participate in community activities and decreased opportunities for education. Child marriage can also result in bonded labour or enslavement, commercial sexual exploitation and violence against the victims.

Parents may consent to child marriages out of economic necessity. Marriage may be seen as a way to provide male guardianship for their daughters, protect them from sexual assault, avoid pregnancy outside marriage, extend their child bearing years or ensure obedience to the husband’s household.

82 percent parents mentioned, as the community is unsafe for the growing girls they marry off their girl children early. 13 percent parents said, a new member in the family would increase the numbers of working hands. India being predominantly agricultural economy the families have always believed in number of working hands which would help them in farming. These community people mostly migrating from rural areas still believe in such practices. 10 percent of the parents credited the practice of early marriage to poverty. Marriage helps in reducing the family size, especially those of girl children. Early marriage even helps them to pay less amount of dowry, another social evil.

**Table 12 Reasons as Cited by Parents for Early marriage**

Answers	Count	Percentages
Increase in number of earning member	5	13%
Community unsafe for girls	32	82.05%
Reduce amount of dowry	2	5.13%
Poverty	4	10.26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	

*Reema is 14 years; she used to go to the Dhapa dumping ground along with her peers to collect materials. There she came across Ramesh, a 17 year boy from another locality, who used to also come to Dhapa for collection. Reema fell in love with this boy. She eloped and married Ramesh as she thought that her parents won't approve Ramesh because he is a non-Bengali.*

88 percent children agreed that they should not marry at an early age and 44 percent parents supported it. But there are instances when the girls elope and marry boys, outside the community, when they indulge into relationships.

Children in the area grow up in an environment where they are born and survive in poor living conditions. They grow up in an environment where parents have petty or no jobs and often indulge into alcohol and gambling. Parents being role models for the children are quick to adopt these practices into their life style. Being out of school or irregular in school the children have weak value systems and exposure to positive elements of life and it also provides them with the time to engage in deviant and delinquent practices.

Children of these communities indulge into gambling and addiction at a very early age. Children, as early as 8 years takes to addiction. *Gutka, Shikar, bidi* are some of the very common addictions, while children are also into addiction of hard liquor. The study revealed that 65 percent of the children interviewed are into some type of addiction.

Figure 18

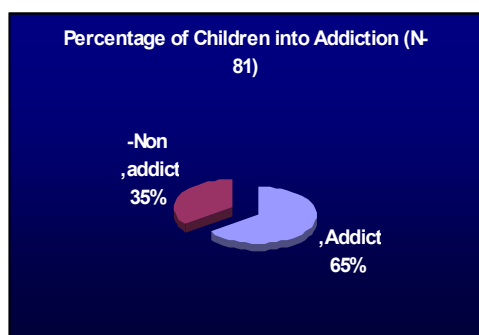


Table 13 Percentage of Children into Different Addictions

Types of Addiction	Number of Children into Addiction	Percentage (%)
Gutka	22	27
Tobacco chewing	13	16
Bidi	8	10
Hard liquor	4	5
Cigerattee	3	4
Zarda	3	4

During FGD the children of Makaltala pointed out that they do not have any play ground so the leisure time is spend at the local country liquor shop by the children in the afternoons and evenings. Addiction is common to young boys mainly, though some girls were seen chewing *gutka*.

A very negligible percent (2 children) of children complained about physical abuse by their parents or the *raddiwalls*. Almost all the children and the parents mentioned that the children do not have any kind of threat or fear both within and outside the community.

The parents highlighted that changes have been noticed in the community related to health and education. This change is credited to the awareness level among the people (23 percent), active working of government agencies (3 percent), effective working of NGOs (38 percent) and the rate of educated people in the community (8 percent).

*Bijoy is 12 years. He has been into rag-picking for last six years. Though a non-formal education center runs in the community he has never attended it. The social worker's repeated plea had gone in vain to bring the child to the center. By the age of nine or ten he got addicted to gutka, bidi, and substances like that. Now he is addicted to hard drinks. The boy almost lives in a trance, less interactive, he spends his time listening to a transistor radio.*



**.2.10 Daily Time schedule of the Children**  
(a finding during the FGD)

**Table 14**

Children of Makaltala	
Time	Activities
6 am	get up from sleep
7 am	brushing teeth, cleaning, to fetch water, girls help in household work
7.30-9.30 am	goes for rag collection to Dhapa (girls and small boys), the elder boys goes to the agricultural field
9.30 am	return back, take bath and gets ready for school
10 am	school
1 pm	return from school
1.30- 2.30 pm	lunch
3-5 pm	some children again goes for rag collection
5.30- 8.30 pm	small children play, chat with friends, listen to radio, watch TV, some children indulges into addiction with the night fall
9.30-10 pm	dinner and goes to sleep

**Table 15**

Children of Mathpukur who do not go to school	
Time	Activities
6-6.30 am	get up from sleep, cleaning, brushing teeth
6.30 am-3.30 pm	Collecting rags
3.30- 4.30 pm	washing and cleaning, having lunch
5- 8.30 pm	playing, roaming about, watching TV, indulge into addiction, sometimes watch

	video shows, etc
9.30-10.30 pm	return home, dinner, goes to sleep

**Table 16**

Children of Mathpukur who go to school	
Time	Activities
6-6.30 am	get up from sleep, cleaning, brushing teeth
6.30 am	goes to school
9.30-10 am	return from school
11 am- 1 pm	rag-picking from road side, vats, etc
1.30-2.30 pm	washing and cleaning, having lunch
2.30- 5.30 pm	some children goes for tuition classes, while some goes for second round of rag collection
5.30- 7 pm	playing, roaming about
7.30-9 pm	studying, watch TV, listen to radio
9.30-10.30 pm	watch TV, dinner, goes to bed



### ***Dreams of the Children***

- ❖ ***To start a shop as like the waste dealers (raddiwallas)***
- ❖ ***To be highly educated***
- ❖ ***To do business***
- ❖ ***To start a hotel***
- ❖ ***To stay in a big house***
- ❖ ***To be rich, wealthy and owner of huge sum of money***
- ❖ ***To stay in healthy environment***
- ❖ ***To get educated and be placed in a high job***
- ❖ ***To become a police***
- ❖ ***To become a driver and travel to different places***
- ❖ ***To marry into a rich family***
- ❖ ***To be a big football player***

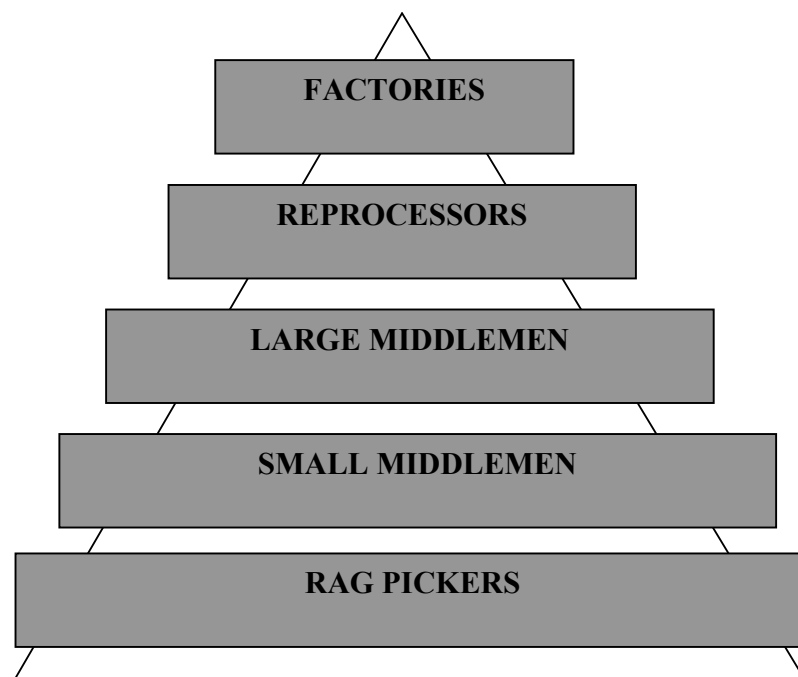
### ***Changes children want to bring to their community if they were to become Chief Minister***

- ❖ ***To make the community suitable for living and create healthy environment***
- ❖ ***To make their residential area beautiful***
- ❖ ***To enhance the scope of work***
- ❖ ***To make sufficient arrangement of water and electricity***
- ❖ ***To build pucca residential houses for all within the community***
- ❖ ***To open a factory where all can get scope of work so that they do not work in dirt any more***
- ❖ ***To open many free schools***
- ❖ ***To build big and open playground where all children can play***
- ❖ ***To remove the Dhapa area***

### 2.3 Recycling Process and Value Addition

Recycling in India is undertaken by the informal sector. This sector includes rag pickers, small middlemen, transporters, larger middlemen and finally, reprocessors. In terms of human resources this sector is arranged in a table top pyramid with rag pickers at the bottom of the pyramid and forming the backbone of waste collection. At the thinner end of the wedge are the small middlemen, who buy the waste from these rag pickers and sell it to larger middlemen who deal with specific items and materials. Above them are factories, who procure supplies from these reprocessors through omnipresent agents.

**Diagram 1**                      **Structure of Informal Recycling Sector**



The rag pickers form a large base of the recycling pyramid. There are a range of materials which are picked up and recycled by this sector. These include plastics, paper, glass, and metals. Studies reveal that this informal sector saves a substantial amount of resource of the municipalities on solid waste management. It has also been seen that a small piece of material increases in value in the recycle chain, even before it is reprocessed. The informal sector has an important role because it is able to undertake recycling of most recyclable materials.

#### 2.3.1 Types of Materials Collected

The most common material that these rag-picker children from Mathpukur and Makaltala collect is plastic which is further differentiated into hard and soft plastic (packets of dairy milk and *dalda*, in the colloquial language it is called '*kagaj*'), black plastic and coloured or white plastics, PVCs and polythene; the hard plastic is called the '*Gudia*' in their colloquial language. The other items collected are

glass (colloquial name 'tang'), metal pieces like tin, iron, aluminium, at times copper, occasionally gold and silver too, paper, cloth pieces, disposed syringe, leather, rubber and seasonally the seeds of mango.

### 2.3.2 Area of Collection and Time

As the Dhapa dumping ground is adjacent to the community most of the children and the adults from Makaltala go to the Dhapa heap to collect materials. As the truck load of solid waste of the city is brought in continuously to this place and dumped, the collection process is almost continuous from the sun rise to sun set. Here mostly the girl children, young boys and females go for collection.

At Mathpukur the children collect the materials from the localities surrounding the community, from the road side vat and sometimes from housing complexes and other places. The adults of this place mostly go to the Dhapa heap and to slightly far of localities to collect the materials. The adults start for the Dhapa area as early as six o'clock in the morning come back just after noon, have there lunch and again set off for collection in the same area. The children go for collection during the morning only.

### 2.3.3 Sorting the Materials and Cleaning

The children of Makaltala and their family members sort out the materials after collection. Different materials are put into separate sacks which are often made by stitching either mosquito nets or the empty cement bags. Sometimes they even wash and clean those materials before selling them to the *raddiwalls*. The children at Mathpukur sometimes collect specific materials which do not required to be separated.

*Anil is 12 years old. He lives in Mathpukur. His father left them two years back. He works for a raddiwalla to help him to sort and clean the materials which the raddiwalla has purchased from the rag-pickers. He works from 8 am in the morning to 7 pm in the evening and earns Rs 40 per day.*

Sorting and cleaning of materials are also done at the *raddiwalls* shop. The *raddiwallas* often appoints small children to do these works of separating the materials and cleaning at a very low wage. Earning of the children is between rupees thirty to forty daily for sorting and cleaning purpose. There are few children who work with some machinery or tools for separating objects, as like pvc and aluminium from a cable wire, for six days a week, from eight in the morning to seven in the evening, earn between rupees eighty to hundred.

### 2.3.4 Selling the Materials to Waste Dealers

Most of the materials collected by the children and adults of Makaltala are sold at Mathpukur. Almost all the shops of *raddiwallas* are at Mathpukur. Sometimes *raddiwallas*, the smaller middlemen, visits the Makaltala community in the morning. They come around seven in the morning and leave the area after

purchasing the materials from the residents of Makaltala by nine in the morning. When the rag-pickers gather fewer amounts of materials, they sell them to these people. These small middlemen come to the community once in ten to fifteen days. They further sell their materials at Bamunghata, a locality which is about 5 to 7 kilometers from Makaltala. But the amount they get on selling the materials to these people is less than what they get at Mathpukur. The reason might be that at Mathpukur the rag-pickers get to sell their materials directly to the *raddiwallas* so they get better return, while the middlemen earn a portion with changing of hand. The table below shows the difference in the selling price of certain materials which they sell to the small middlemen at Makaltala to that of Mathpukur.

**Table 17** Difference in Selling Price to the Middlemen at Makaltala and at Mathpukur

Items	Makaltala (Price in rupees per kg)	Mathpukur (Price in rupees per kg)
Paper	10	12
Glass	1	1
Plastic	13	16
Tin	5	7
Iron	8-10	12-13
Copper & Brass	40-50	50-60

The rag-pickers from Makaltala gather the materials from Dhapa for fifteen days to one month and then they take those materials usually to Mathpukur for selling, on a van. The materials are often taken by the parents or elder brothers or any other elder members of the children. Sometimes the fare of the hired van is paid by the *raddiwalla* which is later adjusted from the total selling price.

At Mathpukur some of the children sell whatever materials they gather directly to the *raddiwallas*. An observation during field visit revealed that the *raddiwallas* purchase these materials from the children and pay them a meager amount.

They often bargain with the children and pay for one *thauka* which means the sack in which the children gather the materials. But when the *raddiwallas* themselves sell the materials, it is on basis of the weight. Some children at Mathpukur sell their materials to the *raddiwallas*, who reside within the community.

The adults get a proper price for the materials they sell as the *raddiwallas* cannot bargain much with them.

*Salil is a 10 year old boy, who collects various materials from the road side vat and sells it to Rashid Mia. As like the other days while searching for materials in the vat, Salil got a piece of copper. He was happy thinking that this piece of copper would earn him a good fortune. But Rashid Mia paid him only rupees two for it. He didn't even bother to weigh the metal.*



### 2.3.5 Changing Hands and Reprocessing

The small middlemen (*raddiwallas*) sell the materials either to the bigger middlemen or directly to the reprocessors at Kadhapara near Beliaghata. The bigger middlemen further segregates the plastics based on the colour and quality and in turn sells them to the reprocessor. During field visit it has been found that there is a section of *raddiwallas* (bigger middlemen) who only purchase specific items as like scrape cable wire from the small middlemen. They hire young boys between the 12 to 16 years to cut and separate the pvc and aluminum component of the cable wire.

Those reprocessors who buy the **plastic** items first treat them with chemical and then it is put for melting which is further made into small granules. This is done separately for different coloured plastics. These different coloured granules are purchased by the small and big factories who make different plastic products using die.

The solid **rubber** is transformed to dust. There are small factories on the Dhapa road that are into this business. After washing and cleaning the rubber are put into a grinder which makes it to dust. Each bag of rubber dust contains 40 to 45 kilograms, per kilogram rubber dust costs one rupee fifty paise. The factories buy the rubber dust and make sheets of rubber, which is further used to make different products.

The **glasses** are melted and are used to for making mirrors and other glass items. Most of the **metals** are, as like iron, tin, aluminium, copper and brass are melted to form sheets which can be further used to make different products.

**Coated Polyethylene (CP)** which are collected from the road side garages, vat and other dumping areas are cut into smaller pieces. Seventy-five paise per kilogram is paid for finishing (cleaning and cutting) the materials. In a day a person can work to finish two hundred kilograms of CP. The companies take the finished product, make it into granules and further use it for making bumpers of car, the foot base and handle of revolving chairs.

### 2.3.6 Value Addition

It is very difficult to say about the exact value addition on each of the materials collected. As most of these businesses are run informally by petty business men, in the slums, without proper registration, employing child labours, paying meager wages and hence they are often reluctant to disclose any information to an outsider. The interviewers came across statements like: *“we are the labourers, how should we know what the prices are, our malik (owner) knows it”* or *“nam o bolbi na aar dam o bolbi na (neither say your name nor price)”*. They fear that these queries are for charging taxes.

The selling price of the materials by the ragpickers and the raddiwallas and the end products will give a chance to understand the increase in value of each item. The table below gives the selling price and end products of some of the materials based on the data collected.

**Table 18 Selling Price of the Materials at Different Level and its End Product**

Items	Selling Price by Rag-pickers (amount in Rs/kg)	Selling Price by Raddiwallas (amount in Rs/kg)	End Product
Glass	1	1.50	mirror, vas, glass
Iron	10-11	13-14	iron sheet
Cable wire	35 (together)*	aluminium: 65 black pvc: 40	aluminium: utensils black pvc: black thick plastic, stand & handle of revolving chair, sole of slippers and shoe
Rubber**	3	-	rubber piece between the 's' of a ceiling fan, solid rubber cycle tyres, doormat, black slippers
Black plastic	4	6	black polypack, plastic sole of slippers, hanger (any plastic product that is black colour)
White plastic	16-18	20-22	plastic glass & plates (use and throw), chairs, tables, bucket, mug, etc.
PVC	8	12	straps and sole of slippers
Soft plastic (dairy milk packets, mustered oil and white oil packs)	10	17	bucket, mug, jugs, etc.
Aluminium	150-250	250-350	utensils
Copper	200-300	300-400	wires
Syringe	16	25	plastic items
Mango seeds	10 (per basket)	-	medicine, saplings

\* The raddiwallas buy the cable wire and then separate the components: aluminium and black pvc and sell them separately.

*\*\*Rubber is differentiated into five different qualities.*

## **VI CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The above analysis has been an extensive learning experience for the researchers and the organization as a whole as it has gradually unfolded the vulnerabilities of children into rag-picking and the community from various dimensions. The study has also given the opportunity to understand the recycling process and the informal sector involved in waste management. The contribution of the rag-pickers often goes unacknowledged while they continue to be languished by different occupational health hazards. There is immense scope and need to intervene in various areas through a multidimensional approach in a holistic manner to bring about change in the lives of the people as well as the children.

- ❖ Intensive awareness on child marriage, child labour, parents role in child rights through banners, posters, mass meetings, street plays and wall writing.
- ❖ Reception-cum-recreation center where facilities for indoor games, education, computers would be there where the children can drop in to spend their leisure time. The center would also operate as a place from where non-formal centers could function.
- ❖ The children in the area has no or limited access to formal education. There is a need to initiate a process of enrolling children above the age of 8 years to formal schools. Bridge course centers can be initiated for the out of school children both drop out and never been school can be initiated in the community. The children should be allowed 12-18 months time to be prepared for formal school.
- ❖ Enrolment drives can be conducted along with the formal schools, especially in Mathpukur, to enroll children in the age group of 5-6 years in the community directly to formal schools.
- ❖ The toddlers are left alone and uncared for in the communities as all mothers are working and remain away from home. A community based crèche or a preschool intervention would be useful for the younger children with support from community women and youths.
- ❖ Some children successfully complete primary education and have some motivation to continue further. Intensive support can be provided to these older children so as to help them to complete their secondary education at the least. They can further become role models and help in motivating other children to continue in school.

- ❖ Health awareness on basic hygiene, nutrition for children, immunization, importance of institutional support, HIV/AIDS, ill effects of drug abuse and alcohol should be organized at regular intervals for disseminating the correct information to the community.
- ❖ Networking to facilitate the community to have water and sanitation facility especially for young girls and particularly for Makaltala community through government initiative is significant for their health and safety.
  
- ❖ A park in Makaltala area near the center can be made more attractive for children to come and play and for other community activities. The park is a positive spot in the community and it has also been the suggestion of the children of the community.
- ❖ Multi-stakeholder groups can be formed at Mathpukur especially for addressing issues related to child protection. These groups can be empowered through trainings on various social issues so that they can in the long run support the other children in the community.
- ❖ Youths can be provided exposure on various vocational skills (children above 14 years) and provide with alternative opportunities of employment/ livelihood.
  
- ❖ A lot of cultural activities should be organized with the children facilitated by the youth group that would again help them to have a positive way of enjoying the life.
  
- ❖ Child Protection Committees can be formed in Mathpukur. Representation of adults, specially, mothers, religious leaders, government representatives and community leaders in the CPC can make it a strong multi-stakeholder group. The group would be oriented about child rights and empowered to take responsibility of the protection of the children in the area.
- ❖ The organization can provide gadgets to adult rag-pickers to ensure safety and to avoid any hazards related to their occupation.
- ❖ Advocacy can be done with government department to open a shop on waste purchasing from the rag-pickers so that they get rightly paid for their materials without being exploited. This can be part of the Solid Waste Management of the state.

**Social Mapping done by the Children of Makaltala**



