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PILOT PROJECT IN NORTHWEST DELHI HAS HELPED NEARLY 100 FAMILIES

Course correction: How these cops are bringing children back to class

Abhay@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: A father from Jahangirpuri was deeply distressed after his 13-year-old son dropped out of school two years ago and fell into bad company. In July, in a drive to identify vulnerable children, police located him and began counselling him with the support from the school principal. He eventually agreed to continue his education and is now enrolled in Class VII.

"As parents, we felt helpless. I kept urging him to go back to school, but he wouldn't listen to us," the father said. "Now, there's a noticeable change in his behaviour and we're keeping our eyes on to ensure he stays on the right path."

The teenager's experience mirrors that of 98 families whose children have been readmitted to govt schools under a Delhi Police pilot project in northwest Delhi. The initiative was prompted by a pattern observed during police investigations that showed juveniles involved in criminal activities were school dropouts or hadn't ever enrolled in schools. This programme, therefore, aims to steer at-risk youngsters away from crime by reintegrating them into the education system and providing them with an opportunity for a better future.

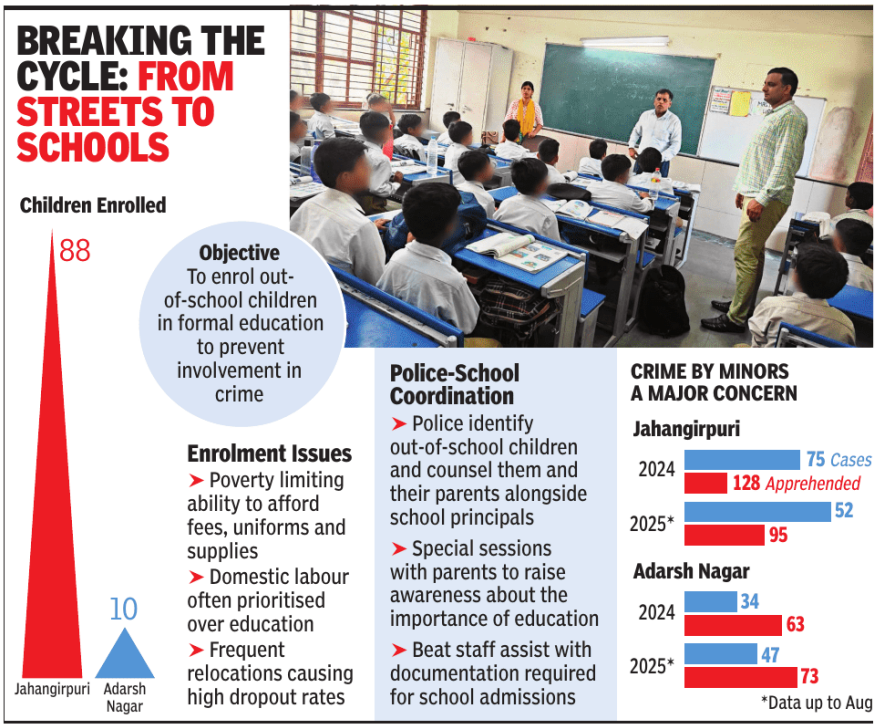
"During patrols, our teams found many children out of school. We began counselling them, offering guidance, and facilitating their return to classrooms," said Bhisham Singh, DCP (Northwest). The project was first launched in Jahangirpuri, where 88 children have been enrolled so far. Building on this success, the initiative recently expanded to Adarsh Nagar, where 10 more children were admitted to schools. Special CP (law and order) Ravindra Yadav appreciated the initiative and asked other districts to follow suit.

In Jahangirpuri, 128 minors were apprehended in connection with 75 cases in 2024. So far this year, 95 minors have been detained in 52 cases. In Adarsh Nagar, 34 cases were registered against 63 minors, while this year, 73 juveniles have already been apprehended in 47 cases. Many of these children come from low-income families, where financial pressures often lead to them dropping out of school early in their lives. In some homes, girls have to do household duties, while boys are expected to earn a livelihood at a young age.

DCP Singh said many of these youngsters were also vulnerable to substance abuse. He said that adolescents aged 14-15 were particularly susceptible to negative influences. Additional challenges include education-related expenses such as uniforms and stationery and the transient nature of housing, with families frequently relocating, thus disrupting school continuity.

Yogendra Khokhar, ACP (Jahangirpuri), engaged with families to raise awareness about the value of education. Beat officers assisted parents with documentation and the school admission process. A principal at a govt school said, "We are providing the youngsters with books and stationery to ensure they are supported in their learning journey."

The results of the project are beginning to show. A woman disclosed that her son dropped out when the family moved back to their native village in Uttar Pradesh for personal reasons but was now enrolled in Class X. "Earlier, he would loiter around all day. With teachers keeping an eye on him now, he's in a better environment and more focused," the happy mother said.



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