

# SURVIVING ON THE STREETS OF CALCUTTA

The paper bag making experience



# Paper Bag Game

Understanding the life of people who live on the streets of Calcutta

**This exercise is a simulation game which will help participants to gain an insight into how the poor people of India cope and survive on the streets of Calcutta. You will need lots of paper and tokens to represent money - each token is worth half a rupee - 0.5R. You can be a lone participants or work with others in 'family' groups of 4 - 5 people**

In Calcutta many families live on the pavements because they can't afford to rent a one-roomed shack in the bustees(slums). The children have to find, or create work to survive; one means of doing this is paper-bag making. The children tear up old exercise books or use newspapers to make the bags, which they then sell to shop-keepers or street vendors.

Tell your family/team that: "They are families living in the bustees of Calcutta. They have no permanent jobs, and there is no social security, but they earn their living by making bags from scrap paper. Many families are involved in bag-making, so competition is fierce."

"Bags are made by folding and glueing." Demonstrate how to make one. (You will need to practice first!) and give out the sample bags.

Bags can be sold in batches often to shopkeepers

"The going rate is 5 paise per bag, therefore you have to make 20 bags to earn a rupee.

"Any sub-standard bags will be rejected by the shopkeeper."

## How to Play

You work for an hour, If working as a family/team group then work for 30 mins.

They pack bags in batches of 10 bags

At the end of 'work' time, go to the worksheet and calculate what you have made and work out how much they could earn in an average day.

You must then work out how you would spend their 'wage'.

As a rough guide an adult in Calcutta would need:

Rent 1.50R

Half kilo rice 1.50R

Half kilo vegetables 1.00R

Fuel for cooking 1.00R

This would be enough for two meals

### Extras

A cup of tea 0.50R

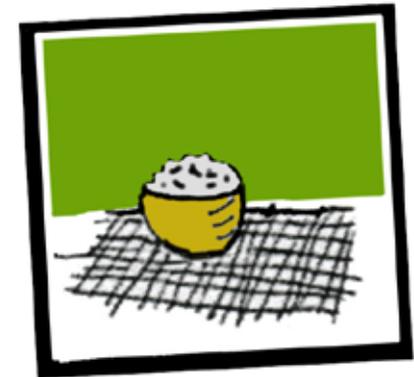
Some fruit 1.00R

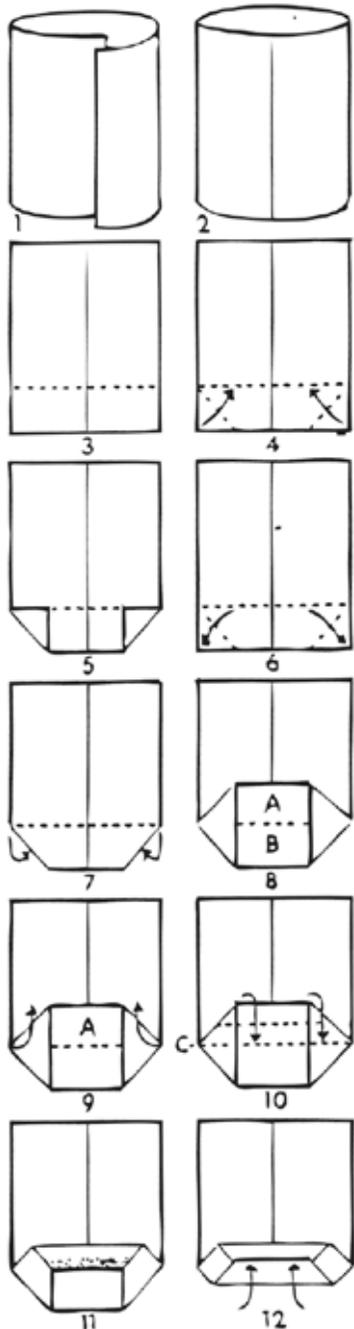
Basic daily expenditure is therefore 6-7R per person.

A family of 4 will therefore need at least 25R a day.

**But this is the bare minimum for survival.**

See 'Price Poster' on next page 4





## How to make your paper bag

A. Fold the paper to the middle. Glue one edge and stick down.

B. Flatten bag. Turn up bottom edge about 5 cm; crease as shown and unfold.

C. Fold up bottom corners to the crease, press down and also unfold.

D. Tuck the corners up inside the tube. Now you have a bag with two flaps, A and B as in stage 8.

E. Fold back the upper flap 'A', and then fold down on itself to the middle line.

F. Put some paste on the edge of flap 'A' as indicated by shaded area in stage 11.

G. Fold up the lower flap 'B' to the overlap with glued area and stick down.



## Worksheet

No. of bags in 10 mins

No. of bags in 1 hour

No. of bags in 8 hr day

Number of bags @ 20 paisa  
Going rate: 20 paisa per bag

(100 Paisa = 1 Rupee)

## Reflection

Did you produce enough bags to survive or did you go hungry

How long did it take you make the bags?

Did anyone help you

How would you think the selling of your bags will go with shopkeepers. They would be very powerful in the process and vital to getting your daily food.

If there was no social security in Ireland, could we make paper bags? Could we sell them locally?

What could we do?

Can the group think of any products that we could usefully recycle?

# Price Poster

Slum Shack 1000 Rupees per month  
(roughly 33R per day)  
Small Flat 4500 Rupees per month (roughly  
150R per day)

School fees 45R per month  
Uniform 250R  
Textbooks 300R  
30cm TV 5000R

1 litre of petrol 15R  
1 litre of kerosene 30R (roughly 15R for cooking  
per day)

Hospital Visit Fee 20R  
Paracetamol 10R  
Pack of 6 nappies 75R

Shirt 150R  
Trousers 300R  
Shoes 700R

1 kg Potatoes 7R  
1 kg Rice 15R (typically enough for 2  
days)

1 kg Lentils (beanstew) 35R  
1 litre of milk 20R  
12 Bananas 15R  
1 kg of Spinach 15R  
1 kg of Flour 15R  
Whole Chicken 70R  
1 litre of cooking oil 55R

