

Minutes

CHILD FOCUS COORDINATION MEETING ON EDUCATION

**14 JUNE 2005 TUESDAY 2.00 P.M
CONFERENCE HALL, COLLECTORATE, NAGAPATTINAM**



Organized by

UNICEF & NCRC
Nagapattinam

The meeting began by brief welcome and introduction by Mr. Godsen Mohandoss, District consultant UNICEF, Nagai who stressed the need for a Child Focus Coordination Meeting on Education which was felt by both UNICEF and NCRC. Since the Govt. School enrolment will be coming to an end by the 30th of June it was suggested that there be a coordination across the various stakeholders including the NGO's the department of Elementary Education, SSA and the various other concerned persons and civil society players to ensure that every affected child go back to the school in an ambience of inclusion. In addition to that the previous years trend of enrolment also left considerable chunk of children non- enrolled. The recent Tsunami in the district has caused considerable psycho-social impact in the lives of the school going children and there is a high probability that children would be initially reluctant to go to the schools.

The Addl. Collector Mr. Ranvir Prasad wanted a coordinated effort by all the concerned parties regarding the enrolment campaign. He suggested that NGOs have a coordination among themselves to ensure that none of the affected children are left out. He also informed that the district administration and the government will offer all the needed support through the SSA and the Department of Elementary Education. He pointed out that rehabilitation efforts like psycho-socio care, relocation of schools etc. are already taken by the district administration and therefore would strengthen the ongoing efforts. The role of the NGOs is very vital in this whole process.

Mr. R. Seetharaman, ADPC of SSA Programme informed the gathering that there are 1600 children who were not enrolled in schools last year out of which 965 were enrolled. The reasons for this situation were mobility, deteriorating interest and peer group pressure as well as pressure from the community especially on boys to go fishing. There was a door to door enrolment campaign was done last year. He was also of the opinion that there is a need to see children out of schools as two categories vis-à-vis those who have never enrolled and those who had enrolled and them dropped out. The strategies for both these groups have to be different. He pointed out that there are provisions under SSA to start bridge courses where there are considerable numbers of drop outs. An enrolment campaign also needs to be taken to ensure that all children out of

schools are included. He gave a passing statistic of the enrolment in Nagapattinam over the last three years. In 2003 there were 38,000 children who were enrolled and in the year 2004 it decreased to 30,000. This year the process is still on.

The DEEO Mr. Panneerselvam highlighted two important case studies. He shared about Palayar where the attendance of children in the existing school building which was hardly damaged was very poor as the building was located near the sea. There was thus a pressure to relocate these schools closer to the temporary shelter / proposed permanent shelter location. On the other hand in Akkaraipettai it was the effort of the headmaster and the teachers there that ensured that despite the fact that the school building was badly damaged attendance in the new academic year was almost complete. He suggested that each NGO could along with the district education officials take the responsibility to ensure total enrolment in each of the 57 affected schools. He promised all his support to make the enrolment drive a big success.

Fr. Antony Raj of TMSSS pointed out that some families had left Nagapattinam and there is a deficit in enrolment by 10-15%. He also felt that one of the main concerns in the education of children was the non-availability of proper forms of conveyance. The schools in many instances were located way away from the temporary habitations. Further there was a lot of low morale in schools because in many cases the new academic year has seen the children in different schools especially as their habitations had changed and many children had a change of school based on the proximity of schools from the temporary shelter locations. The element of trauma could also not be written off.

Mr. Gabriel of Sneha gave a brief introduction of the presence of Sneha across the fishing hamlets of Nagapattinam. They have already started a campaign to ensure that none of the affected children in fishing hamlets were being left out. Their field reporting had gathered that many of the families who would have otherwise been in Jagadampattinam (a harbour town in Pudhukottai to which fishing communities of Nagai migrate seasonally) are still and Nagai and their children have been enrolled in the local school. Thus they were reporting a higher trend in enrolment. Sneha informed the floor

that they had completed a comprehensive survey across the fishing hamlets of Nagai and the same was showing a high number of orphans and semi orphans who were highly vulnerable. They had also received a lot of requests to subsidize notebooks and uniforms as the schools were only giving only the text books, limited number of note books and one set of school uniforms. They felt that one set of school uniforms would hardly be sufficient for any school going child. The psycho-social impact of Tsunami has also affected the enrolment during the current academic year.

Mr. Monappa from Oxfam Trust shared that his organization is promoting the use of telemedicine in the Tsunami affected areas and requested voluntary help for space and ISDN line to start centres in needy places.

HRDLF/VDS displayed their comprehensive survey form which was focusing on the problems of Dalits. They felt that unless the dalits be seen as a specially vulnerable group they will be left out from being included in the enrolment processes.

NESA highlighted the issue of Tribal children along with the dalits since enrolment has to cater all sections in the society. There were Irula and other indigenous communities who have been affected by the Tsunami and the earlier experience has been one of exclusion as far as relief having reached them is concerned.

Ms. Jonnaki of CRS shared about the child registration forms that TMSSS had developed and the need for child surveillance to ensure that every affected child is adequately taken care of in a systematic manner.

Summing up of Issues:

It was decided to sum up the different kinds of issues that had emerged during the coordination meeting and the list was as follows.

- i) Psycho-social support
- ii) Identification of Drop outs
- iii) Focus on Children of marginalized communities (dalits and tribals)

- iv) Focus on Children with multiple vulnerabilities (orphans, semi orphans, girl children, children prone to become child labourers and disabled children).
- v) Making schools accessible – the distance factor, conveyance, water and sanitation measures etc.
- vi) Monitoring the demand of donations by some schools (as opposed to GO 33)
- vii) Children living with grand parents / guardians
- viii) Children who have crossed the school going age or facing age related problems.
- ix) Problems of Conveyance, notebooks and uniforms.

Mr. Ajai of NCRC elaborated the need for a decentralized enrolment campaign and it was unanimously agreed to have seven block level meetings involving the local NGOs, AEEOs, Headmasters, SSA personnel and other officials and volunteers. He suggested that the 9 above identified issues be categorized into issues connected with Access, psycho-social issues, children of marginalized communities, school policies on enrolment (esp. private schools), monitoring of individual cases of exclusion and the content of the aspiration of affected children.

Action Plans

The meeting came to an end with the agreement that there will be seven block level meetings in the following places by the end of this month in order to commence the enrolment in a big way. The same had to be re-worked as there was some overlapping of dates with the Water and Sanitation unit of UNICEF that had planned training programmes for the AEEOs and SSA staff that were clashing with the Block level meeting dates that were finalized.

Schedule for Block level Enrolement Campaign Meetings:

Sl.no	Name of Block	Proposed date	Revised date	Contact Person from Dept of Elementary Education
1	Nagapattinam	23/06	23/06 (Thursday)	K.Sivaprakasham AEE0 (04365-225991) M.Shanmugam AAEE0
2	Keelvellore	23/06	23/06 (Thursday)	AEE0 04366-276511
3	Sempannar koil	24/06	24/06 (Friday)	S.Paulraj AEE0 (04364-283541) C.Kanagaraj (AAEE0)
4	Sirkali	22/06	24/06 (Friday)	J.Raghavan (AEE0) (04364-274456) M.Ganesan (AAEE0)
5	Kollidam	20/06	25/06 (Saturday)	T.Ganesan (AEE0) (04364-278354)
6	Keelaiyoor	24/06	25/06 (Saturday)	A.Marimuthu (AEE0) (04365-265165)
7	Vedaranyam	20/06	27/06 (Monday)	R.Balasubramanian (AEE0) (04369-252858)
8	Thalainairu	22/06	27/06 (Monday)	G.Nagarajan (AEE0) (04369-234250) P.Kumar (AAEE0)

List of Participants

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