

Workshop on child rights and child protection

Date : 24.01.2006
Time : 10.00 am – 5.00 pm
Venue : Hotel VPN, Nagapattinam

The workshop started with a welcome note by Mr. John of SOS CVI, followed by a self introduction by the participants. Mr. Jerald of NCRC briefed the purpose of the workshop as a stock taking and planning session on what the NGOs working for children in the district could do in the days ahead.

Mr. Suresh Dharma of CCRD (Centre for Child Rights and Development), Chennai, gave an elaborate speech on “Protect the Child – Protect the Nation.” He spoke about six 'R's such as the Rescue, Relief, Restoration, Rehabilitation, Rebuilding and Rights which should be ensured in a post-disaster phase. The latter, he stated, as the essential step and the absence of it could prove fatal than the actual disaster. He said that the human rights begin with the rights of the child. Stating the United Nations Child Right Convention (UNCRC) as commonly recognised code, Mr. Dharma asked the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to cross check if their projects reflected the code. In his detailed presentation he spoke the following:

- x The UNCR code applies to children below 18 years old
- x The children were the most affected in the disaster
- x The three main problems created by the disaster are the problems of individual childhood, collapsing of family structure and the social structure
- x Both the political administration and the CSOs hold the key responsibility of mending the problems
- x The child, family, social and political structures have to be inter-linked for a better process of restoration and rights for children
- x The 54 sections of the UNCRC's code could be reduced in to four. They are the right to survival, the right to development, the right to participation and the right to protection
- x The issues of the children should be studied in the light of the UNCRC's code and in relation to the structures of the society

Insisting on creating a child friendly environment, Mr. Dharma suggested the CSOs working for children to adopt new methodologies in order to avoid violence. He

also cautioned them not to subscribe to the traditional caste structural practises like the child marriage.

Followed by the speech, *Muthurasu*, a short film on child labour was shown. Then the CSOs working for children shared their learning experience gained from the field. The following shared their experience:

SNEHA

- Realising the role of parents, SNEHA is holding a monthly parents' meeting on child rights
- Evening study is given to the children, compiling play techniques
- The Children's Panchayat for children below 14 and the Adolescent Panchayat for children between 14 and 18 years are formed. They help identify concerns for children like inadequacy of bus and misuse of children by teachers in schools
- A Child Protection Committee is formed with representatives from the Children Panchayat, Village Panchayat, NGOs, and the Parents. It gives a forum to address any issue concerning children and work out feasible solutions
- Children have begun to learn to ask for their rights. This is the effect of Children's Panchayat. The vision is '*not only to be ruled but also to rule*'
- As children are creative, there is much to be learnt from them

Karna Karya Trust

- We have learnt not to directly speak about study to children as they have a phobia towards it. We make use of entertainments like 'Puppet Show' to gather children and promote values
- We have realised the need for using new approaches in educating children
- We are assessing the need for constructing a community college in the area

Good Shepherd

- Although, the local Panchayat is strong in making decisions concerning the village, our experience was different. We could convince the Panchayat and save children from child marriage. The local people are ready to listen if we convince them that we do it for their good

After a break for lunch, the participants formed four groups and discussed about the key issues concerning children in the district. The following were the consensus:

1. Problems of children with single/new parent
2. Inner domestic child labour (Ex. Caring the little children of the family)
3. Dependency factor created by tsunami and relief process
4. Drop outs from school due to excess of resources given to fishing villages

Followed by the consensus of the discussion, Mr. Mathialagan and Mr. K.K.Dasa from People's Watch, Madurai, talked on the challenges faced in protecting the rights of children. They presented a case of a 11th standard girl from Nagapattinam who committed suicide. As the case was still in progress, they held a discussion with the participants. They also explained the complexities involved in case proceedings which causes diversion of truth. Speaking on the laws ensured in the constitutions and amendments, Mr. Mathialagan said that in spite of having laws against abortion, female infanticide, Eve teasing and child labour, these still make news in the media. And when it comes to filing an FIR on these issues, it is all the more difficult.

After the talk, Mr. Jerald received the data collected by the NGOs on the Prime Minister's Child Assistance Scheme. During the discussion on the 'road ahead' the following decisions were taken:

- The steering committee formed for the children's day celebration will continue as the coordinating core group
- The balance amount from the the Children's day celebration will be utilised towards education of the economically challenged students; the steering committee will decide the beneficiaries
- Those NGOs who did not give the figures were asked to submit it on or before Wednesday, the 1st February prior to the steering committee meeting so as to facilitate the committee to come to an action plan on the Prime Minister's Child Assistance Scheme

The workshop came to an end with a vote of thanks by Mr. Jerald. The NGOs were given a CD each on the children's day function held during late November.

Annexure: List of Participants

List of Organisations who participated in the Workshop on "Child Rights & Child Protection" on 24.01.2006 (Tuesday) at Hotel VPN, Nagapattinam.

Sl. No	Organisation	Name of the Person/Designation	Phone/Mobile	E-mail
1	Peace Trust	K.Panneerselvam	242866	
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6	Oferr	K.Ganesh Raj	9842104887	
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13	Tert - Suchi	P.Dhinajararajan	255381	
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36	ROSE	K.Muruganathan	264144	
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38	Gramalaya	N.Raja	9443161263	
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42	Help a Child of Child	J.Jabaraj	9865076761	mdu_tlac@sanchamet.in