

Workshop on Children Parliament

Date : 24.06.2006

Time : 10.45 am – 04.40 pm

Venue : Spiritual Centre, Tharangambadi

The meeting was attended by NGOs and children representatives from the villages where the NGOs work. After the welcome address by Mr. Jerald, two staff from SNEHA sang a Tamil song written by children highlighting their rights. Followed by the song, the participants introduced themselves. Then Mr. Jerald briefed the purpose of the meeting as learning to understand the process involved in the formation of children parliament and the responsibilities involved thereafter.

The workshop contained four input sessions on children parliament. Ms. Malarvizhi of CREATE talked on 'What is Children Parliament and its purpose'. In her presentation she highlighted the following:

- The fourth right ensured in UNCRC on the rights of child speaks of participation. Participation means finding out and developing talents of children for a holistic growth, which is well complemented by Children Parliament
- In the Children Parliament, children are exposed to all the procedures followed in the actual parliament, like the filing nomination, election of leaders, assigning responsibilities, analyzing local issues and problems in the monthly gathering of the parliament, ect.
- Ms. Malarvizhi told that the Children Parliament facilitated by CREATE runs for 6 months and has parliamentary meetings on the 2nd Saturday of every month
- Children up to class 10 are members of the Parliament. The other children from 16 to 18 years come under the adolescent parliament
- The Children Parliament discusses not only local issues but also are informed of child rights, works of NGOs and any other relevant information or general knowledge
- She said that initially the children used to be shy to address the parliament. But, after a couple of experiences, they grow in confidence

The second session was on the roles and responsibilities of ministers and the process of election. Ms. Dhanalakshi of SNEHA did the presentation. She explained the roles of each minister with photos combining the assumed roles of children in Children Parliament. She explained the following as roles pertaining to ministers:

- * **Prime Minister:** He sanctions petitions. His actual work involves reading, verifying and facilitating the entire activity of the parliament
- * **Minister for Home Affair:** He is in charge of taking down the minutes of meetings and presents it in the following meeting
- * **Finance Minister:** In charge of maintaining accounts for the income and expenditures

- * **Education Minister:** In the context of Children Parliament, the minister has to ensure enrollment of all the children of the village in school, take the issues of drop outs, ect.
- * **Health Minister:** The Health minister should ensure cleanliness in the village and can report the problems to concerned authorities
- * **Minister for forest and environment:** He can involve in plantation of trees, protecting *Alayathi* forests, ect.
- * **Minister for Public Welfare:** Electricity, water and child protection could be taken care by him
- * **Minister for child protection:** All the rights of the child in the village should be checked and ensured by him
- * **Minister for Information & Broadcasting:** He gathers information on children and shares it with other children

After explaining the roles of Ministers in the context of Children Parliament, Ms. Dhanalakshmi elaborated the process of conducting election for Children Parliament. It involves the following:

- ❖ Filing of nomination
- ❖ Choosing a symbol
- ❖ Selection of election convener and polling through ballots
- ❖ Children choose the ministers they want for the Children Parliament
- ❖ Term of Children Parliament is decided during the election
- ❖ Ministers who don't perform well would be changed
- ❖ NGOs to train ministers to run the Children Parliament on their own after the NGOs leave the place for ever

She also briefed about expenditure incurred from election.

Following it, Mr. Suresh of REAL PLAN gave a talk on the benefits of Children Parliament for the children. The following are the gist of the talk:

- ♣ The NGO used to provide drawing sheets in the meeting of the Children Parliament. The children contribute articles in different forms like poems, drawing or any other which are published in a monthly magazine named *Netbilies Times*
- ♣ The children are also given training in videography and are taken on exposure visits
- ♣ Skill development programmes
- ♣ Web site is launched to showcase the talents of children. Presently, 20 children have been chosen.

Followed by the talk, the Ministers of Children Parliament from different villages shared their experience in the Children Parliament:

1. SNEHA's Vennila

The Children Parliament engaged in the following activities:

- Discussing child rights
- Learning and benefiting from #Go33

- Seeking educational as well as monetary help for poor children
- Ensuring education for all, especially convincing parents of adolescent girls to send them to school
- The *Vennila* Children Parliament submitted two demands to NCRC: Help get #GO33 for all eligible students and keep them informed about development on the bank account started for children by using Right To Information Act

2. OFERR

Master Ramarajan, Student Leader accounted the following activities for their Children Parliament:

- Identification of talents
- Initiation of enrolment
- Sending back the drop outs to schools
- Keeping the environment clean
- Ensuring cooperation of the traditional Panchayat
- Monetary help sought for poor children's education

3. REAL

Ms. Devani, the Health Minister accounted the following activities:

- Keeping the environment clean
- Ensuring enrollment
- Help for tailoring and computer training

4. CREATE

- Learnt about the command followed after the ministerial positions through the Children Parliament, including media publicity
- Mastery over public address
- Protest march against child labour

After the sharing of children, Mr. Rajan of LCPN spoke on the rights of alternatively abled children. Outcome:

- He requested the ministers from the Children Parliament to ensure disable friendly structures in schools for alternatively abled children and clear problems in their admission
- He asked the Children Parliaments to promote discussion in their meetings on the problems of alternatively abled children and educating parents about these children's rights
- Social as well as monetary helps for these children

Followed by the sharing, Mr. Jerald spoke on how to conduct meetings of Children Parliament. He accounted four types of Children Parliament. They are the Village level Children Parliament with 30 to 40 ministers that gathers weekly, Panchayat level Children Parliament with 10 ministers from Village level Children Parliament that gathers quarterly, Taluk level Children Parliament that gathers half yearly and District level Children

Parliament comprising ministers from Taluk level Children Parliament. He stated that Nagapattinam has seen the Village level Children Parliament, not the rest. Therefore, the aim is to form a District level Children Parliament consisting representatives from all the Children Parliament facilitated by all the NGOs by the end of September. He also asked the NGOs to start the Village level Children Parliament by end of July in all the villages they are working. Speaking about how to conduct meeting of Children Parliament, Mr. Jerald highlighted the following:

- Start the meeting with a song or *Thirukkual*
- Prime Minister to appoint a Speaker and ask him/her to facilitate the parliament
- Speaker thanks the Children Parliament for choosing for the same
- PM welcomes all
- Minister for Home Affairs takes down the minutes; reads the minutes of the previous meeting and evaluates the decisions taken
- Every minister gives report and engages the gathering in discussion and arriving at decisions
- Draw action plan for the next month
- Prioritise problems and choose a couple of problems to work for the next week
- Proposing vote of thanks
- The time of the meeting should be less than one hour

Followed by the talk, there was a group discussion for both children as well as NGOs separately. Outcome:

Children – “Expectations of children from school, community, NGOs and government:”

School	Community	NGO	Government
Fill all teaching posts	Clean environment	Educational help for poor children	Bus facility in time & no strikes
Need qualified teachers	Employment for all villagers	Evening school	Reducing educational fees
Goodwater, library and toilet facilities	Toilet for every house	Weekly medical camp	Primary Health Centre, higher secondary school in every village
No special fees	Ensuing education of all children		Water and electricity facilities
Teachers not to use children to get their works done	Protecting the environment	Reclamation of agricultural land	Monitory benefits for alternatively abled children
		Children parliament in every village	Gender equality
		Awareness to parents on cleanliness	Clean toilets

NGOs – “Can we form Children parliament in the villages where NGOs are working by end of July and how?”

Outcome of discussion:

- NGOs have to cooperate with each other in order to avoid duplication in the same village
- Merge the other existing clubs to Children Parliament
- NGOs to explain about Children Parliament to children; not force them to form
- Include alternatively abled children in Children Parliament
- Keep to childhood
- Equip Children Parliament to function on their own
- Discussion with traditional Panchayat before starting Children Parliament

After the discussion there was a general body meeting of the NGOs working for children on specific issues. Excerpts:

- Mr. Jerald explained about difficulties in moving Prime Minister's Child Assistance Scheme and GO33 further for the benefit of eligible children. Discussing on the issue of orphan home for children in the district, he expressed that the homes here are not satisfactory. And so a letter to the District Collector has been drafted addressing these concerns and that he was waiting for an appointment to meet him
- He also read out the account details. The balance as on date was Rs.94,412
- It was also shared to all the NGOs to contribute at least Rs.1000 towards education of 1000 poor children in the academic year; NGOs also would go to corporates and well wishers to mobilize fund for the same
- It was decided to host Taluk level meetings with elected candidates in the 5 taluks.

The following are the persons in-charge for the same:

Taluk	NGO	Contact Person	Contact number
Tharangambadi	OFERR	Mr. Naveen	99944 85302
Sirkali	SAVE	Mr. Ayyappan	94434 98489
Vedaranyam	CREATE	Ms. Malarvizhi	94434 76655
Nagapattinam	AID	Mr. Ramakrishnan	94435 73719
Mayiladuthurai	VDS	Ms. Mary	99420 68172

Followed by the discussion, there was a brief evaluation of the workshop. The following were shared/suggested:

- ✓ The NGOs with experience in forming Children Parliament to support those trying to form
- ✓ NGOs could share their experience in starting Children Parliament towards the end of August
- ✓ All the NGOs agreed to start Children Parliament in all the working villages
- ✓ Efforts should be taken not to duplicate children in the Children Parliament

Ms. Dhanalakshmi of SNEHA proposed the vote of thanks.