

District Level Workshop on Child Protection

Date : 30.03.2006

Time : 9.30 am – 2.30 pm

Venue : Hotel VPN, Nagapattinam

The workshop was organised jointly by NCRC and Save the Children. The meeting started with the *Tamil Thai Vazhthu*. In her welcome address Ms Annie George asked the gathering to introspect what the workshop had meant for each as individuals belonging to organisations with specific roles and interests. As post tsunami Nagapattinam is in exodus from relief and rehabilitation to developmental phase, she invited the participants to look at the core problems of children in the district like drop-outs from schools and put the best use of the workshop to analyse and track the map of children in the district with a view to ensuring protection for children in all possible manner. She also appreciated SNEHA and REAL for their commendable job in this respect.

Objectives of Workshop

Followed by Ms. Annie George, Mr Raj Ratnam, Programme Manager of Save the Children spoke about how a joint workshop on child protection was materialised in Nagapattinam. Quoting the discussions Save the Children held in Cuddalore with the district level officials in the previous month on issues related to children, he said that they had desired to conduct the same in Nagapattinam district. However, after learning that the NCRC organised monthly meetings of the NGOs working in the district, it was decided to conduct a workshop for the NGOs working for children in the district in order to have more clarity of issues in the field.

Chief Guest Address

Followed by him, Ms. Suriya Kala, District Level Welfare Officer, shared on range of issues concerning children. Following is the gist of ideas she tossed to the gathering:

- The primary right of a child is to allow itself to live like a child
- Parents are not supposed to engage in arguments or fight in the presence of children

- Speak to a child only what is necessary for a child
- Children's rights should be kept with utmost care in places like house, institution and organisation
- As far as possible children have to be put up with the family
- In working with children, way of approach is a crucial factor
- Fully qualified and trained staff should approach children for counselling
- In dealing with orphaned children, alternative ways have to be found out to divert their past, if necessary
- Children should be shown avenues to become good personalities through education rather than making professionals through it
- Parents should have social perspective to impart to children

Ms. Suriya Kala also spoke about healthier practices in nurturing the child. She requested the NGOs to get competently trained to work effectively with children and apply a holistic approach in the filed for an integrated development of the stakeholders.

The sharing was followed by a brief self introduction of the participants.

Juvenile Justice Act and its Implication

Mr Kannairam of UNICEF gave a detailed presentation on Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 and its implication. Excerpts:

- A person who has not completed 18 years of age is a child or juvenile
- The act deals with two clauses of children: juvenile in conflict with laws (any juvenile who has committed offence) and juvenile in need of care and protection
- The Juvenile Justice Act has constituted a Juvenile Justice Board to del with the juvenile in conflict with the law and a Child Welfare Committee to deal with the children in need of care and protection
- Homes are also constituted under this law to deal with both clauses of children. The first clause includes Observation homes (pending enquiry) and special homes (reception and rehabilitation). Whereas, the second comprises Children's Homes (pending enquiry) and Shelter Homes (drop-in centres). These homes can be maintained by the state government or any voluntary organisation with agreement with the state government
- The act also has got number of orders and penalties pertaining to children under the clause of children in conflict with laws as well as rehabilitation and social reintegration measures for children in need of care and protection

Nagai Child line 1098

Followed by Mr Kannairam, Mr R. Somasundaram presented a critical evaluation of the functioning of the Child line in Nagapattinam district. The following are the excerpts:

- ✓ Child line is a free, emergency helpline for children under eighteen years of age to get assistance to shelter, medicine, rescue, death related sponsorship and emotional support
- ✓ It was started in Mumbai in 1996 and is registered through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- ✓ There are 66 call centres in India, including 10 in Tamil Nadu of which four have been set up after the tsunami
- ✓ Nagai Child line 1098 has received nearly 20,000 calls in the first three months of the tsunami. At present it picks calls up at an average of 1000 to 2000 per month of which 95% are from children
- ✓ Initially, calls were made seeking material helps; however, at present medical help and information on missing children are sought
- ✓ Following are the activities of Child line: crisis intervention, emergency service, referral services, follow up services, networking, advocacy and lobbying, counselling assistance, outreach service, awareness and play for peace
- ✓ Toll-free facility is given to all the people in Nagapattinam STD – 04365 – switching area
- ✓ Nagai Child line 1098 has achieved the following in its one year service: rescue of missing children, counselling, referral service, re-enrollment of dropout children and educational assistance
- ✓ Anyone can call on 1098 when one witnesses child in labour, marriage, wandering without schooling, weeping alone, begging, being trafficked and adopted illegally, in abuse, need to be rescued, discomfort with the elders who accompany it and a child in need of medical emergency

Child Protection Perspective

Mr Prabhat Kumar of Save the Children gave a presentation on child protection based on UNCRC and Indian Constitution. In the presentation, he highlighted the following:

- Strong child protection mechanisms like networking and others are needed to prevent and address issues concerning children
- A sustainable national and local care and protection system has to be designed
- Working with children as partners

- In the legal and constitutional forum, both the UNCRC and Indian Constitution has got range of articles ensuring protection of children
- There are also other key legislations in the form of Immoral trafficking Prevention Act 1956, Child Labour Act 1986, Child Marriage Act, etc
- Currently, the Commission for Protection at national and state level 2005, and National Plan of Action 2005 have been developed in the welfare of children
- Some special academic courses on child protection are also offered at universities
- Integrated and community based approach is the key to working for child protection

Sharing of experience and learning

Followed by the presentations Mr Roche of REAL and Mr Prabhakaran of *Malarchi*, Trinaveli shared their experience gained from working with children. The outcome:

Mr Roche

Mr Roche accounted range of programmes that involved children in Nagapattinam district. They are the Children Creativity Camp, Participation Show, creation of peer groups, Children Consultancy Camps for shelter plans, Photos for Life, Nethilees Times, children parliament and Nethilees TV time. He also spoke about the plan of forming a cable network for children throughout the East Coast. Speaking about the learning gained from working with children, he highlighted that the children have got lot of potentials and they can perform in all fields. As a result, the community where the children belong to, have begun to respect the children better.

Mr Prabhakaran

Mr Prabhakaran argued that the realities like caste and colour have to be talked out for a better protection of children. Speaking about the child labourers in Sivakasi, he highlighted that the children in the industry have come under the direct risk of the parents, instead owners, owing to poverty. He also mentioned that foundations of the society are not proper and thus have to be changed for a better practice of rights. In order to achieve protection for children, the adults have to mend their mentalities.

Group Discussion

Followed by the sharing of experience, the participants formed three groups and entered in to an active group discussion on the following issues:

1. Strengthening Core Group (child rights)
2. Effective functioning of Child line
3. Plan for summer programme

The following are the outcome:

1. Strengthening Core Group (child rights)

The first group came out with the following suggestions to strengthen the Core Group:

- Regular meeting and information sharing by the core group
- Regular follow-up of identified issues
- Defining the purpose of the Core Group
- Monthly news letters on Juvenile Justice board or child related issues
- Common meetings and programmes for Core Group to come together
- Gaining influence on the national/state/district level policy making
- A member each from an NGO to form part of the Core Group
- Conducting meetings in the southern and northern part of the district
- Proper documentation of Core Group meetings
- Better communication by e-mail and other ways
- Assigning responsibilities for the members of the Core Group for each meeting and giving fed back

2. Effective functioning of Child line

- Orientation and visits to Child line by staff of all NGOs working for children
- Training for Child line staff
- The entire district to come under the toll-free helpline
- Forming Children Working Committee in schools and orient them on Child line
- Collaboration with all NGOs
- Short stay home for children
- Better networking
- More orientation and outreach programmes
- Monthly updates to be passed on via mail to all NGOs
- Banner, sticker and posters in all villages
- More media visibility
- Advocacy and lobbying with ex-officio members of the district
- NGOs to invite Child line to participate in their public meetings

3. Plan for summer programme

Summer Camp & Gaps:

SNEHA:

- Visit to Ooty with children from 51 villages for orientation on child protection
- Publishing books
- Children panchayats
- Workshops on rights on April 14th (planning)
- Trips and overall camps can be arranged with the help of NCRC

DPG:

- Two days summer camp for 4 – 15 year age group in education

SPEECH:

- Refresher course on Disaster Management and Trauma care training.

DMI:

- Picnic for children

OFERR:

- Summer camp to Chennai for 12th class Students to know the preparation and growth of *Agar-agar*
- Cultural programme for 18 villages for one week
- career counseling

NCRC:

- Child rights advocacy on April 30th

- Anti Child Labour Day
- Plan for manifesto by the children to interact and expel the present nominates of all the political parties

Ajay Kuruvilla:

- Think about political economy and their demands
- Video programme on specific issue
- Facilitate thinking for neighborhood specific parliament across Nagapattinam.

PCI:

- Skill education for children
- Counselling
- Street Play
- Education for Parents
- Summer camp for environmental modification.

WORD Trust:

- Coaching classes for all students for next year studies
- Cultural programmes
- Awareness for parents

REAL-PLAN:

- Children's *Mela*
- Exposure visit

Karunakarya:

- Two days camp for teenagers
- Meditation and courses on behavioral Changes

Kudumbam:

- Coaching for 10th class students
- HIV awareness education.

PHOENIX FEDERATION:

- Entrance class coaching for a month for 12th class students
- Learning and Resource centre for all children
- Games and competitions

After the discussion the meeting was closed for lunch.

Annexure: List of Participants: DISTRICT LEVEL WORKSHOP ON CHILD RIGHTS

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