

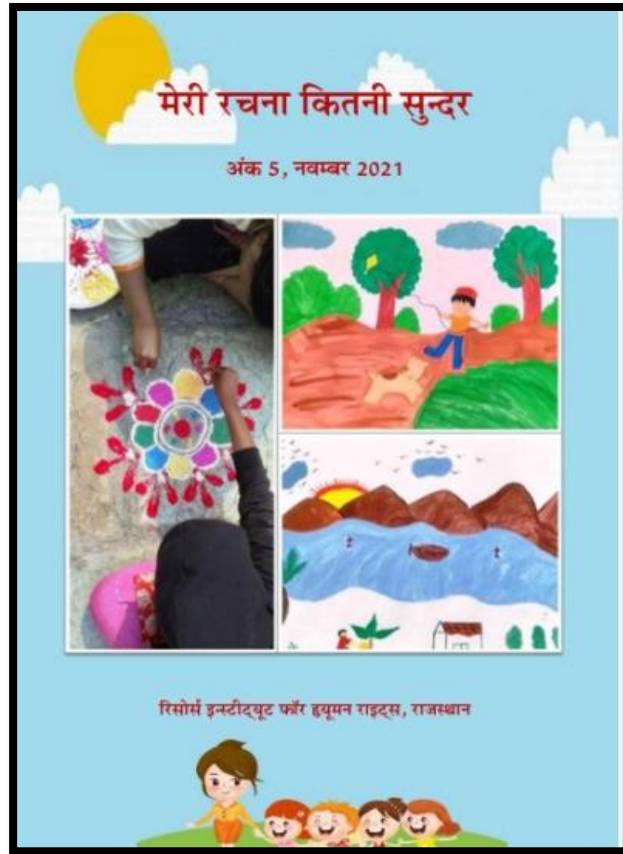
INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE CHILD RIGHTS IN RAJASTHAN

A Report

for

April
March

2021 –
2022



RESOURCE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (RIHR)

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REPORT FOR YEAR 2021-22

A. CHILD RIGHTS: INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL AND RAJASTHAN PERSPECTIVE

In 1989, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – an international agreement on childhood. Since then, it has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. The Convention to the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most complete statement of child rights ever made.

India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children in 1992. India has more than one-sixth of the global population; therefore, achieving global UNCRC mandate and the success of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda depends on the progress made by India. Quite simply, the world will fail in achieving its targets if India fails. India's progress is all the more important due to the sheer size of its children's population -- as out of 1.3 billion people in India nearly 40% are under the age of 18¹.

India has progressed well on a number of child-related indicators, including introduction of a number of progressive legislations to protect the rights of children. Under-five mortality has come down significantly and marriages of girls has come down by half in past ten years contributing to global reduction of incidence of child marriage. However, even today, violations of child rights is an area of great concern.

In Rajasthan, children (0 - 18 years) constitute 43.6 percent of the total state population. Educational attainment level among children and youth in Rajasthan is considerably lower as compared to national average with the gender differences in enrolment substantially wider. Among young people (aged 10–24), only 92 percent of men and 77 percent of women were literate in 2011².

As per the recent analysis done by National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) and Child Rights and You (CRY), crime against children in Rajasthan has increased by 39 percent from 2016 to 2020³. This rate is more than double the national rate of crime against children in the last five years, which stands at 17 percent. In all, 42%⁴ cases of overall crimes against children reported in 2020 in Rajasthan were of kidnapping and abduction.

¹ Census of India, 2011

² United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2014

³ Crime in India, National Crime Record Bureau, 2020

⁴ http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/87767965.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cpst

B. About - Resource Institute for Human Rights (RIHR)

Established in 2008, Resource Institute for Human Rights (RIHR) is a non-government organisation which aims at advocating for realization of internationally and nationally set standards for human rights, especially in the area of child protection. RIHR's efforts are focused towards building a holistic understanding on child rights. In this endeavour, RIHR attempts to address the gaps in existing knowledge and information on the subject. An extensive study and analysis of existing schemes, policies and budgeting becomes significant towards building a rational approach to child protection. Therefore, RIHR intends to analyse policies, programmes, schemes and the state budget to highlight the efforts required filling the existing gaps from grassroots to international level.

Since 2008, RIHR has undertaken research and documentation on a range of child rights issues including child labour, child trafficking, forced child begging, juvenile justice, child sexual abuse among other issues relating to children.

RIHR believes in action-oriented policy research studies and its wider dissemination to enable inclusive growth and development. RIHR's efforts are focused towards motivating and mobilising the communities with right-based approaches and facilitate appropriate action by the policy makers and other important stakeholders.

RIHR's VISION

To be a vibrant forum for action-oriented research that would guide support citizens, civil society and administration in order to advance rights of the children.

RIHR's MISSION

To emerge as an institute with international parameters offering range of opportunities to the common citizen and meet academic need with regards to the child rights and development. RIHR aims at bridging the information gap between the common citizens and policy makers through main stream media and alternative print media.

C. RIHR's EFFORTS IN 2021-22 TO ADVANCE CHILD RIGHTS

The year witnessed a much severe impact of COVID-19 with second wave creating havoc and making adverse impact on the socio-economic status of many families. However, the children bore the brunt of the impact that COVID-19 made to the families.

During the reporting period, while limited in-person activities were organised complying to COVID appropriate behaviour, a lot of virtual events and activities were organised to maintain and accelerate the momentum of the efforts so far.

Below are the details of the efforts made in the year 2021-2022:

a. One Stop Crisis Management Centre for Children - 'SNEH AANGAN'

While working in the field of child rights and protection, it was distressing to see the confusion, apathy and procedural delays that children had to face when they come in contact with police. While Rajasthan Police was also making their efforts to promote child

friendly policing, a need was felt to establish a center to provide all the basic facilities and support that a child needs under one roof when he/ she comes in contact of police. With this thought and being sensitive towards children's needs, a one-stop crisis management center was established in Jaipur and was named 'Sneh Angan'. The center was a joint effort of RIHR, UNICEF and Rajasthan Police. In the year 2021-22, following support was provided to children:

- *Counselling and Psychological Support*

In the reporting period, intensive counselling and psychological support was provided to children who were victims of gender-based violence, missing children, child marriage, sexual abuse children, run-away children and various other children whose rights were infringed upon. A total of 51 children (all females) were supported by the centre.

- *Follow-up*

In the reporting period, regular contact was established with 79 girl children who were previously supported by the centre in some form or the other. The follow-up is a continuous process and will go beyond the reporting period. The main aim of the follow-up was to know the current social, educational, economic, psychological and personal status of the children who have been benefitted by the centre. The problems that were observed during the follow-up contact/ visits were addressed accordingly.

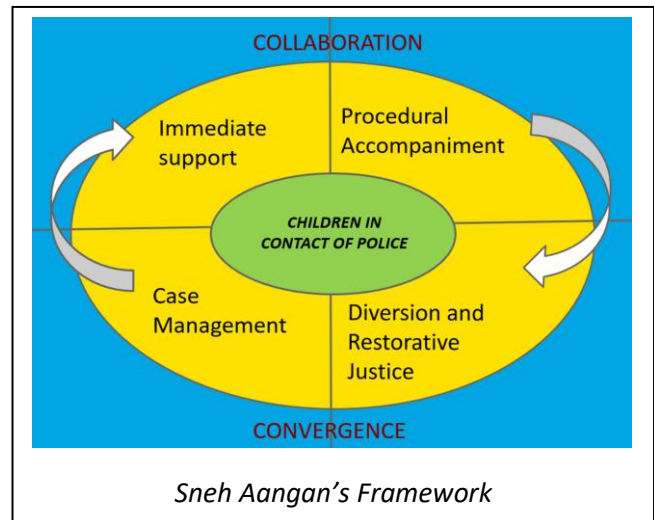
- *Legal Support*

During the reporting period, Sneh Angan Center provided legal support to 28 children. Among these 28 cases, advocate was appointed for 8 cases by the centre. The aim for providing the support of an advocate was to facilitate and accelerate the legal proceedings with regards to the particular cases through visits to court from time to time. In 20 such cases, support through legal advice provided to the children (all girls) and their respective families and were informed about the entire legal proceedings.

Further, between January – March, 2022, legal support has been provided to 13 children and their families. Out of these cases, 3 cases are being taken forward by lawyers appointed by the honourable court. The legal support was provided to a total of 33 cases and free-of-cost legal services (through lawyer) were provided in 11 such cases.

- *Rehabilitation Support*

Cases related to missing children, child trafficking, and relationships/ love affair were brought to the Sneh Angan Center. With regards to cases related to missing children, 6



children in the year 2021 and 7 children in year 2022 were rehabilitated either back to their families or in child care institutions. The prime concern while rehabilitating each child was their safety. The centre staff makes regular contact with the rehabilitated children.

b. Building the capacity of service providers at children care institutions

- *Government Juvenile Home*

Sneh-Aangan centre appointed three Resource persons for computer, art & craft and theatre in the State Juvenile Home. The resource person for computer provided skills on basics of computers to 29 children in home which will support the children in future for better livelihood opportunities. The resource person for art & craft person worked with children in two separate groups - a) 6 to 14 years of age and; b) 15-18 years of age. The art teacher conducted following activities with both the groups:

- paper cutting & folding
- making decorative items
- masks making (paper mesh art)
- best out of waste (craft from waste materials)

Apart from the above activities, some additional activities were also organised which included plantation drives, sports and personality development. The resource persons for theatre worked with children on voice modulation, expression, presentation techniques to facilitate personality development in children. After the skills gained, a play also prepared and performed by children on child protection related issues. This also built the awareness of the children on child protection issues and how to address them.

Sneh-Aangan also made available some musical instruments like Tabla, Harmonium, Dholak & Manjeera to the children in home with an aim to bring positivity and productive engagement of children in recreational activities through music. With all the above-mentioned activities, the regular counselling support was continued for each of the child in home solve daily or traumatic problems of children.

- *Government Girls Shelter Home*

Sneh-Aangan centre appointed a resource person for girls of State Girls Shelter Home to provide regular education to girls in the home. The centre also supported filling up of the form 22 girls of for grade 10 & 12 from Rajasthan State Open School. The resource person worked not only on academics, but organised a lot of co-curricular activities too for the overall development of girls. These activities included:

- poster making contest
- drawing competition

- self-assessment techniques
- celebration of festivals
- workshops on child protection issues

With all the above-mentioned activities, the counselling and psycho-social support was provided on a regular basis given to girls for their better emotional and social development outcomes. With support of counselling, few girls were also rehabilitated back to their homes. Regular follow-up were conducted for the girls who were rehabilitated.

c. Advocacy to positively impact policy environment for advancing child rights: Strategic Engagement with Members of Legislative Assembly

During the general assembly elections and Rajasthan assembly elections (2018-19), the Rajasthan Network on Protection of Child Rights initiated a process-based activity to influence election manifestos of leading political parties through a consultative process across the state engaging children and other stakeholders. Based on the consultations, a charter of demand - 'Children's Manifesto' was developed. Later, the document was shared with all the leading political parties. This process was called – *Dasham*. *Dasham* provided a joint platform to children and civil society organizations to share their concerns and strengthen the child rights movement in Rajasthan.

However, COVID-19 exacerbated the existing issues and inequalities that affect most those children who were already deprived and marginalized. To maintain the pace of the momentum gained, the analysis of assembly questions was undertaken during the reporting period for 14th assembly session and questions were analysed vis-à-vis child protection issues and other issues related to children including health, education and development. Apart from this, RIHR pro-actively reached out to Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and supported some of them to raise questions on children issues including protection, health, education and development. As a result, following eight MLAs raised questions during 7th session of 15th Vidhaan Sabha:

- Ms Anita Bhadel
- Mr Amit Chachan
- Mr Kaluram
- Mr Khushvir Singh Dojawat
- Mr Gulab Singh Kataria
- Mr Vasudev Devnani
- Mr Ram Narayan Meena
- Mr Mukesh Bhakar

E- DASHAM: LEADING AND FACILITATING THE ALLIANCE TOWARDS ADVANCING CHILD RIGHTS IN RAJASTHAN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The first and second wave of COVID-19 created havoc in the lives of communities across all geographies. While not a category at risk from a medical viewpoint, children have been significantly impacted by the pandemic. In particular, COVID-19 has exacerbated the risks of children experiencing maltreatment, violence at home and poor nutrition. The strict lockdown measures also reduced the opportunities for children to participate in extra-curricular activities, to reach out to supportive adults at school and in the community, and to access the justice system & child protection services. To make the situation further worse, the economic downturns had increased the risks towards child poverty and it is strongly associated with parental employment status.

In response to address increased vulnerability of children during the COVID, *Dasham* aligned its work accordingly thereby using virtual platform to extend services and enhance outreach. Hence, '*E-Dasham*' platform was created to initiate dialogue across stakeholders and provide children a platform to participate and express their voices. Direct outreach and services were also strengthened through CSO partners. *E-Dasham* has been instrumental in addressing some of the critical needs of children including extending psycho-social support, legal assistance, capacity building, participation and initiating policy dialogue.

➤ Engaging with children and building their skills

During the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were also made to reach out to children virtually. Following workshops were organised for children during the reporting period:

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Children Benefitted</i>
1	May 26 – July 15, 2021	Five batches (5-day each) of workshops were organized for children on 'Photography and Creative Writing'	A total of 187 children from 22 organizations across 17 were capacitated

➤ Enhancing the capacities of Civil Society Organization (CSOs) towards advancing child rights within their areas

As the pandemic started a declining trend after second wave of COVID-19 in 2021, RIHR organised a series of in-person orientations for civil society organizations to orient and capacitate them towards identifying and responding to the emerging needs of children due to the pandemic. During the reporting period, four workshops were organised (2-days each) in Jodhpur, Bikaner, Ajmer and Jaipur on various child protection issues including sexual abuse and cyber security. Details of these in-person orientations are below:

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>CSO participated</i>
1	September 4-5, 2021	Child Protection	Jodhpur	35 CSOs benefitted
2	September 7-8, 2021	Child Protection	Bikaner	35 CSOs benefitted
3	February 4-5, 2022	Child Protection & Sexual Abuse	Ajmer	25 CSOs benefitted
4	March 7-8, 2022	Cyber Security among Children	Jaipur	25 CSOs benefitted

Apart from the above mentioned in-person events, following virtual events were also organised:

	<i>Date</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>CSO participated</i>
1	May 25 – July 10, 2022 (7 virtual meetings)	Planning meeting for proposed workshop to be organized with children on 'Photography and Creative Writing Skills'	32
	June 15, 2021	Planning E-meeting with DASHAM alliance members	43
2	June 22, 2021	Workshop on 'Support provided by central and state government to children who have lost their family members dur to COVID-19 pandemic'	67
3	September 17, 2021	Webinar: 'Mandatory Registration of Child Marriage announced by State Government'	73
4	October 10, 2021	Workshop on the occasion of 'International Day for the Girl Child'	45
5	October 10, 2021	Workshop on 'Effects of Mental Health on Women & Children during COVID-19'. Key Speakers: Ms Pradanya Deshpandey, Dr Narendra Gupta, Ms Chaya Pancholi	45
6	December 27, 2021	Discussion on 'Legal and Social aspects in Change of Minimum Age of Marriage'. Key Speakers: Mr Sanjay Nirala (UNICEF), Mr Ramakant Sathpathy (Save The Children), Mr Govind Beniwal, Ms Indira Pancholi, Ms Kavita Shrivastva, Dr Rajeev Gupta	85
7	January 24, 2022	Discussion on 'Third Wave of COVID-19: Problems & Solutions for increased coverage of vaccination for 15-17 years of Children' Key Speakers: Dr Rakesh Vishvkarma (WHO), Dr Raghu Raj Singh (Vaccination Dir. GoR), Dr Manisha Chawla (UNICEF), Ms Majari Pant, Dr Narendra Gupta (Jan Swasthya Abhiyan]	56

➤ Develop relevant resource material (IEC and reference material)

During the reporting period, a booklet was developed on 'Case Management in Child Protection'

D. WAY FORWARD FOR 2022-23

The Resource Institute for Human Rights plans to focus on following key areas in the next one year:

- Strengthening the Dasham network
- Bringing out publications and other knowledge products on various issues related to Child Protection in Rajasthan
- Building the skills of NGO representatives across the state on counselling
- Piloting community-based child protection models and documenting successful models for wider dissemination
- Strengthening engagement with critical stakeholders