

## Regional Workshop of Jaipur Division, Rajasthan State

On

### 'DASHAM – Participation of Children in Democracy'

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2018

Venue: Vardhaman Bhawan, Jaipur



~ FXB India Suraksha (NGO Coordinator for Jaipur Division)

in collaboration with

Rajasthan Institute of Human Rights

## ABBREVIATIONS:

UNICEF	United Nations' Children's Emergency Fund
FXBIS	Francois Xavier Bognoud India Suraksha
RIHR	Resource Institute for Human Rights
CSO	Civil Society Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization

## **PREFACE**

FXB India Suraksha (FXBIS) in association with UNICEF and Rajasthan Institute of Human Rights (RIHR) organized a two day regional level workshop on 'DASHAM- Participation of Children in Democracy' on 11th and 12th September, 2018 at Vardhaman Bhavan, Jaipur, and Rajasthan. The objective of the workshop was to come up with charter of demands to be heard upon and addressed by different political parties in their respective manifestos and present it during the Vidhan Sabha (State Legislature) elections to be scheduled towards the end of the present year. 140 children and 60 representatives from various organizations, Child Welfare Committees, government schools, shelter homes from the districts of Jaipur rural, Jaipur urban, Bassi, Sikar, Dausa and Jhunjhunu participated in the workshop.

This report provides an overview of the workshop, background information and objectives, a summary of the presentations and discussions, and the final charter of demands to be submitted to political parties for inclusion in their party manifesto, in wake of the approaching state elections in December 2018. It is critical that the voices of the young minds be heard and their demands be acted upon even if they do not have voting rights.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

When the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child met for its first formal session in September/October 1991, it discussed the very meaning of Children's Rights. The committee concluded that the ***Convention on the Rights of the Child was about human rights for children.*** In drafting guidelines on how governments should write and structure their initial reports on the implementation of the convention, four core principles were highlighted, which would guide and form the base of any nation to draft its policy for children's rights: **(1) Non-Discrimination** - The obligation to provide equality of opportunities among children irrespective of their ascribed status. **(2) Best interests of the child** - Children, especially when they are very young, are vulnerable and need special support to be able to enjoy their rights fully and therefore the State should ensure this in all of its actions concerning children. **(3) The right to survival and development** - The principle most directly related to children's economic and social rights is formulated in the right to life article. The article goes further than just granting children the right not to be killed; it includes the right to survival ***and development, as formulated in Article 6:2*** - "State parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child." **(4) The views of the child** - This is about respecting the views of the child. In order to know what is actually in the interest of the child it is logical to listen to him or her. These four principles together contribute to a new outlook towards children and their rights, while giving an ethical and ideological dimension to the convention. They are based on the notion that children too are equal as human beings. The fourth principle especially (formulated in Article 12:1 of the UN Convention that "States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming her or his own views, the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child...")

Overview of Rajasthan in context of Child Vulnerability

Rajasthan recorded a population of 1.58 crores male children 1.40 crores female in 2018. The state's sex ratio (SR) stands at 973 per 1000 males and Child Sex Ratio (CSR) is 90 notches lower at 883 per 1000 male children. SRB (Sex Ratio at Birth) is 942 according to the Report.<sup>i</sup>

The IMR or Infant Mortality Rate is a high for girl children is a disappointing 49 percent, while Under Five (U5) Mortality Rate is at 51 per 100 U5.

Given below is a brief overview of the fact sheet pertaining to the state in the four core domains of protection, education, health and survival and poverty:-

<p><b>Protection:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 35.4% girls are getting married before the legal age.</li> <li>● 25.1% women have ever experienced spousal violence.</li> <li>● 93.0% girls who are victims and reported the cases under POCSO act knew their offenders.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Education:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 25.1% of women have 10 or more years of schooling.</li> <li>● Though 99.7% schools reported having a separate toilet for girls but 79.8% reported that the toilets are usable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health and Survival:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 59.1% households have no access to toilet facilities and defecating in open.</li> <li>● 55.2% women reported that they have used hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period.</li> <li>● Only two out of three pregnancies (68.0%) are registering for ANC.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Poverty:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 41.4% of the women in the state have a mobile phone that they themselves use.</li> <li>● 24.1% of the women own land/property (Alone or with other people).</li> <li>● 58.2% women have a bank account that they themselves operate.</li> <li>● 11.7% of elected representatives are women.</li> </ul>

(Source: [https://www.planindia.org/sites/all/themes/plan\\_india/images/pdf/gender-vulnerability-index.pdf](https://www.planindia.org/sites/all/themes/plan_india/images/pdf/gender-vulnerability-index.pdf))

Since it is crucial to understand gender empowerment in order to get a good grasp over the future of the future generation, this sub-section has thrown some light on the former too.

The two-day workshop in Jaipur, like in other divisions (zones), was designed to be conducted at regional level covering all the districts of Rajasthan discussing the issues faced by children belonging to different caste, creed, tribe, region, living in rural areas,

living in cities, school going, drop outs, not attending schools, living in the railway stations, streets, shelter home, those who are specially abled, adolescents and youth etc. Before Jaipur such regional level workshops had been organized in Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bikaner and Ajmer.

Towards the end of the workshop, the demands highlighted by the children were compiled and presented before all workshop attendees. The audience also included print and electronic media house representatives and chairperson of CWC, Dausa. Around 60 CSOs working on diverse child related issues had participated, with RIHR and FXBIS taking the core lead to organize the two-day event.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.planindia.org/sites/all/themes/plan\\_india/images/pdf/gender-vulnerability-index.pdf](https://www.planindia.org/sites/all/themes/plan_india/images/pdf/gender-vulnerability-index.pdf)

## THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

### Background

A total of 140 children and adolescents had participated in the DASHAM workshop. These children associated with the 60 odd CSOs related with different issues of child rights were from the Jaipur heartland or adjoining areas. One of the groups was represented by adolescents from the CSO, Rajasthan Association for Deaf.

The workshop commenced with an introduction to all participants - children and adolescents, behind the idea of initiating a “Children’s Manifesto”. That a charter demand be prepared for the children and by the children themselves appealed to all young minds. Although at a micro level currently, this initiative was reflective of the 3rd (“The Right to Survival and Development”) and 4th principles promoted at the UN Convention of 1991 on Child Rights.

## Methodology Of Engagement

On both days of the workshop, the attendees were briefed about the purpose of the workshop and the need for their participation on highlighting the problems they face in their day-to-day life in terms of quality education, health facilities, protection and safety, overall development and participation as rightful citizens.

**On the first day**, the children were divided in 5 groups of 16-17 participants (boys and girls) with one facilitator (resource person) to steer the discussion towards discussing all aspects pertaining to the aforementioned themes that concerned the young minds. The entire discussion time was spent on hearing from participants what issues they faced in day-to-day life and the expectations they had from their local legislators in order to solve them.

Two separate groups were formed exclusively of girls as well as boys of age group 14-18 years because it was felt that more gender specific issues would get highlighted without fear or hesitation among the participants.

Discussion within all groups brought to fore these issues which were critical for the young minds: the need for stopping child marriage, the deep desire amongst girls to study further, the need for hygiene and sanitation in their community areas, the need for sex education amongst both boys and girls, abhorrence towards deep seated gender discrimination and lack of skill building/ vocational institutions in rural and peri-urban areas. Two youth representatives from Tonk and Sikar districts pointed to the need for training girls in sports.

The gender exclusive groups voiced their concerns on early marriage among both girls and boys. The girls sought raising the government mandated age limit of attaining adulthood from 18 to 21 years, so that they may steal some more time from family to continue education.

**On the second day**, the 7 groups presented their Charter of Demands (the key demands highlighted are given in sub-section). Most demands pointed towards the lacunae in policy formulation and their implementation on ground. For instance, there are provisions in the

State policy on sanitation and hygiene in urban slum areas. This is part of the State List under the Constitution of India. Yet almost all participants coming from urban slum localities pointed to the urgent need of having sanitation and clean drinking water facilities in their communities of residence. This is one example. There were several others on education facilities and school/ colleges' infrastructure, child marriage, etc. which clearly defined the huge mismatch between policy and practice of government and State supported public welfare agencies.

Voicing one such significant gap, Mr. S. Pal, President, Rajasthan Association of Deaf said at the concluding ceremony of the event - *'There is a need for appointing interpreters for specially abled children especially those who have hearing impairment, in schools, hospitals, government offices, etc. Teachers should be trained on sign language for better education of children living with hearing impairment.'*

Although Mr. Ashok Kumar Mudgal, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Dausa, appreciated the initiative behind conducting such a child-centric event, he also brought out an issue about the shelter homes for children. In his words, *"Interventions in shelter home for children is very important for ensuring care and protection of children and for this the government must ensure that the State machinery is fine-tuned to address all aspects of a child's safe-keep."*

The two day workshop, however, ended on an affirmative note. Summing up the workshop, FXBIS' Programme Manager, Satya Prakash asserted that the impact of such workshop is to be addressed at three inter-connected levels – firstly, at the individual level that we try to bring change within ourselves as well as around us. Secondly, at the organizational level, we continue the movement of encouraging and empowering the children and also advocating about their rights with relevant authorities. Thirdly, at the state level, ensuring proper implementation of laws and strengthening the mechanisms to restore the rights of children.

Ms. Mamta Borgoyary, CEO, FXBIS held that although these two days' of discussion had been very intensive, it had resulted in the revelation of critical gaps in implementation of various child related mechanisms at the village, district and state level. Hence, this workshop would not be only limited to introducing children manifesto to political parties



but the learnings would reflect in our advocacy agendas for strengthening the overall system and its mechanisms. Without this endeavor to strengthen the system, no real longtime progressive change could be felt.

On a parting note, Mr. Narendra Shikwal, Child Welfare Committee, Jaipur, commended the initiative and requested the participating children and adolescents to keep their momentum going and continue to assert their rights towards building a bright nation which is free and equal for all young minds to thrive in.

## KEY ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS

This section comprises a compilation of the key issues raised by all groups of participants. On analyses, most groups were found to enumerate similar, even identical issues. The key concerns of all groups are as given below. Recommendations by participants for resolving the issue can be found as sub-text within the issue spoken of:

- The need for better transport facilities in rural areas especially for girls to reduce dropouts from school;
- better gender neutral opportunities in sports at educational institutions and in the community areas;
- compulsory self-defense courses for both boys and girls in education curriculum;
- user-friendly procedures for obtaining education loans;
- centres for registering complaints of sexual misconduct by either fellow student(s) or faculty;

- health camps in schools since most adolescents felt weak (possibly due to being anaemic);
  - increase the age of marriage to 21 years for girls;
  - appointment of counselors in schools for both career guidance and handling personal/ family issues;
  - improved facilities in terms of drinking water, clean and hygienic toilets, availability of sanitary napkins, safe disposal of sanitary napkins at schools;
  - quality mid-day meals at anganwadi centres (this was voiced by most children);
  - clean potable water facility in slum areas as well as regular cleaning of sewage pipelines, which otherwise became a breeding ground for vector diseases;
  - removal of garbage near schools due to the same above mentioned reason;
  - de-licensing shops selling cigattes, bidi, gutka, tobacco in the school vicinity;
  - installing street lights in slum areas;
  - non-refusal for admission of children not having *Aadhaar* card in their name or their parents in schools;
  - reduce teacher absenteeism and not allowing teachers to carry cellphones in classrooms both of which severely hampered the enthusiasm of serious students;
  - parents' counseling for promoting girls education;
  - formation of children and youth clubs under the supervision of adult groups in communities and villages.
- It is important to note that the group represented by children from Rajasthan Association for Deaf highlighted the hurdle of communication they faced in receiving education at schools or higher educational institutions due to untrained teachers and non-provisioning of appropriate facilitators for the hearing or visually impaired. As a result their competence in academics remained extremely weak throughout. These students suffered on account of State failure in providing for a suitable teacher. At other public service places too, such as hospitals and public

departments, they suffered immense harassment, *sometimes even sexual*, due to the fissure in communication.

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