

DASHAM

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN DEMOCRACY

TWO DAY REGIONAL WORKSHOP IN BIKANER

URMUL TRUST

2018

HOTEL SHAGUN PALACE, BIKANER



BIKANER

INTRODUCTION

“It is important to keep that fact in mind, and to understand that political participation in a democratic society involves much more than voting ... We hold that child and adult citizens are both capable and deserving of assuming deliberative roles in the democratic functioning of their communities and nations”.

URMUL has been working towards strengthening the status of the child in the society. It understands the onus on progression and development lies on children and all efforts need to be focused on these founding pillars of the society. It has been working systematically with the communities, the local authorities, as well as policy-makers to strengthen opportunities and ensure survival for children in the desert. From ICDS to schools, URMUL has closely worked and proved long-term changes can be strewn the society. It has worked to strengthen the communities to take the ownership of development constructs and positive progression in the society.

A two day workshop was organized at Hotel Shagun Palace, Bikaner on 6th and 7th September, 2018 by URMUL Trust under the guidance of Resource Institute for Human Rights and UNICEF. It was organized to listen to the voices of children, issues and problems which must be included in the manifesto of different political parties of Rajasthan.

This report provides an overview of the workshop, objectives and outcomes and the final charter of demands which would be submitted to the various political parties.

The discussions with children were very positive as they raised their voices and shared the problems they face in their life. The workshop was a great opportunity to learn from each other and to explore ideas.



WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the workshop were to bring together regional experts and children on one platform, in order to:

- Conduct series of regional workshops in the campaign and spread awareness on some of the critical issues faced by children in Rajasthan.
- Create an open platform for government representatives, civil society, individual social workers, child protection representatives and children to share their views and opinion on participation of children in democracy.
- Prepare and submit charter of demands by children to be presented to the political parties in Rajasthan.
- Ensure that children's opinions matter and voices heard.



PRE-WORK

A pre-work meeting was conducted to share and discuss the objectives of the workshop. Experts, Child Protection representatives and other workers participated and shared their opinions. As per Arvind Ojha of URMUL Trust it is necessary to create a conducive environment for children while talking to them. He also said that we should listen to children very carefully and also to note down every point they raise. For this we need an environment where children enjoy, play and participate in discussion. It was also decided to create a comfort zone for children where they can share their experiences and problems with experts. Shiv nayal said that children should feel free to discuss and share their thoughts and experiences regarding their life in community and school. The parameters decided for the workshop were:

- To create a conducive environment
- To let the children enjoy and share their thoughts
- To divide children in groups and discuss
- To listen to children without any biases
- To document all the thoughts and ideas that children share

बाल अधिकार संरक्षण

राज्य की जिम्मेदारी

दशम

लोकतन्त्र में बच्चों की भागीदारी

संभाग : बीकानेर

दिनांक : 6 व 7 सितम्बर 2018

स्थान : होटल शगुन पैलेस, श्रीगंगानगर रोड़, बीकानेर

पहल

राजस्थान बाल अधिकार संरक्षण साझा अभियान, राजस्थान आर.टी.ई. फोरम, गर्ल्स नोट ब्राइड-राजस्थान समूह, जन स्वास्थ्य अभियान, बाल सुरक्षा नेटवर्क, उदयपुर

आयोजक

रिसोर्स इंस्टिट्यूट फॉर ह्यूमन राइट्स एवं यूनिसेफ, राजस्थान

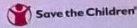


सह-आयोजक

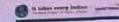
सहयोग



for every child



act:onaid





SESSION ONE

INAUGURATION

Everyone gathered in a big hall. It was an exciting moment for all. Children, experts, Child protection representatives, volunteers and various social workers were eagerly waiting for the event to begin. Chainaram of URMUL Trust welcomed all and expected everyone to contribute towards fulfilling of the objectives of the workshop.

Members of the Child welfare Committee of Bikaner- Hazra Chauhan, Jaishri Pareek along with Arvind Ojha of URMUL Trust and various children inaugurated the workshop by lightening of the lamp and worshipping goddess Saraswati.

A prayer devoted to goddess Saraswati was sung by children.



ICE-BREAKING

Shiv Nayal and Vinita conducted the ice-breaking session. It was necessary for the children to know each other and to feel comfortable while enjoying the moment. All children were engaged in activities where they played games, talked to each other and have fun.

As per the activities children ran from one place to another without touching anyone, walked like an elephant, formed a big circle at one moment and a straight line in another moment.

All children enjoyed the activities. Soon they were friends to each other and feeling comfortable. With the ice-breaking session coming to an end everyone was ready for the upcoming sessions where the voices of the children were to be raised.



SESSION TWO

THE GROUPS

This was the beginning of the formal discussions. Children were divided into five groups each having moderators, experts and documentation in-charges. These groups spread out at some comfortable place and discussed the various issues for two days.

Groups		
	Moderators	Documentation
1	Sunil Lahari	Rewatram
2	Shiv Nayal	Khemaram
3	Vinita/Anita	Parveen
4	Vikram Singh	Reena/Gahdaram
5	Nishant Arun	Pukhraj

The groups gathered at different places to begin the discussion. Moderators helped them to be comfortable and feel free to share their experiences.



GROUP ONE

Group one started with a game. Vinod- a thirteen year old child initiated the game. He wrote some activities on a sheet of paper and asked everyone to pass it on while the music is being played. As the music stops the child with the paper would perform the activity written in the sheet. This game was entertaining for the children and everyone seemed to enjoying it.

Sunil Lahari- moderator of the group introduced the broad objectives of the workshop. He asked everyone to participate and to share their ideas and experiences of the school and community. He also discussed the rights of children regarding education and harassment. All the children were ready to share their thoughts. While discussing, one of the girl said that the children's voice should be heard by the parents first. They should be involved in the household decisions.

Another major issue that was raised by children especially girls was that in most of the villages girls are not allowed to go to school. In some villages girls attend primary school and then they are forced to drop out. Child marriage has been the main reason behind girls' dropout from school after primary classes. The other reasons as shared by children are lack of secondary

schools in the village. Some of the girls who attend secondary schools said that they do not have toilets and changing rooms in their schools.

Another major issue discussed was Child Marriage. At first two girls said that there is a lack of awareness about Child Marriage and the related legislation in their village. Most of the girls are involved in child marriage. When asked by the moderator whether they are happy with child marriage; the girls said not a single girl is happy rather they want to study and involve in some work or job. Moderator motivated the children to discuss the causes for child marriage. Children responded with various reasons. According to a boy the main reason behind child marriage is the pressure from the community. The father feels that it is his divine duty to marry her/his child as soon as possible. Poverty has been the other reason.

“Do you discuss your problems with your parents?” moderator asked the children. The response was ‘NO’. Most of the children said that we do not share our problems with parents as our voice is not considered to be important. We are not a part of decision making either in family or at school.

Major issues and demands:

- Need for senior secondary schools
- Female teachers at school
- Proper monitoring of teaching staff
- Sports facility at schools
- Cleanliness and hygiene in schools
- Proper distribution of sanitary napkins
- Need for changing rooms in schools
- Elimination of child marriage
- Participation of children in decision-making
- Need for sex education
- Health facility to be improved





GROUP TWO

Shiv Nayal and Kamla- moderators of the group began with singing a song. All sang the song, enjoyed it and soon the atmosphere was friendly and comfortable. Children were excited as they got an opportunity to share their experiences and problems. They were happy as there was a platform where they could raise their voice which will be heard and reacted upon.

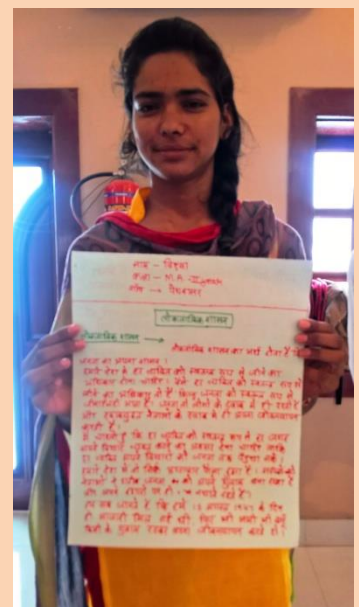
Children began with their introduction and shared some experiences in the school, at home and with their community. All children talked about schools, teachers, toilets and sports facility and all those issues that they face when things lack. They wanted the teachers, Anganbaadi centres and the Panchayats to listen to their voice.

Major issues and demands:

- Proper sports facility at school
- No discrimination on the base on caste, religion and gender

- Schools must have computer labs
- All children should attend school
- Special provisions for specially able children
- Anganbadi centres in all villages
- Toilets in all schools
- Cleanliness and hygiene
- Need for senior secondary schools with separate toilets and changing room for girls
- Children's assembly (Baal-Sabha) at panchayat level
- Elimination of child marriage and child labour
- Schools must have proper staff with female teachers
- Political representatives should talk to children from time to time
- Health facilities must improve at village level
- Mother care system to be improved
- Girls need psychological support in family and society
- Police stations to be established in villages

Most of the children demanded that education and health should be the priority for the government. Elimination of Child Marriage was agreed upon by all.





GROUP THREE

Vinita, moderator of the group began with the introduction. Then she asked the children to sit in pairs and introduce one another. This exercise was exciting and fun-filled as the children who were strangers earlier now talked to each other in pairs and came to know about each other.

‘Naav Chali..Naav Chali..’ was the song that all recited with joy. The song helped the atmosphere to become easy and comfortable for children. All enjoyed the song. After the song sung for two times, it was time to share the objectives of the workshop. Vinita discussed the objectives with children and elaborated them.

“What are the things you feel go wrong at your place?” asked Vinita. Parents shout on each other, do not listen to children, marry their children at early age, beat their child.. were the replies to Vinita’s question. All children were now sharing their problems.

Most of the children were aware about Child marriage and Right to Education. They all wanted to eliminate child marriage and seek help from government and civil society.

Major issues and demands:

- Parents should involve children in decision-making
- Schools at village level with proper arrangements of toilets, changing room, sports facility etc.
- All children must be enrolled in school
- Cleanliness and hygiene
- Schools do not have sufficient number of teachers
- Sometimes teachers misbehave with students particularly girls
- No discrimination based on caste, religion and gender
- Anganvaadi centres to run and work efficiently
- Senior Secondary schools at block level
- No corporal punishment in school
- Girls should also be allowed to participate in outdoor games
- Health facilities to be improved
- Eve teasing to be prevented
- Provision of community toilets





GROUP FOUR

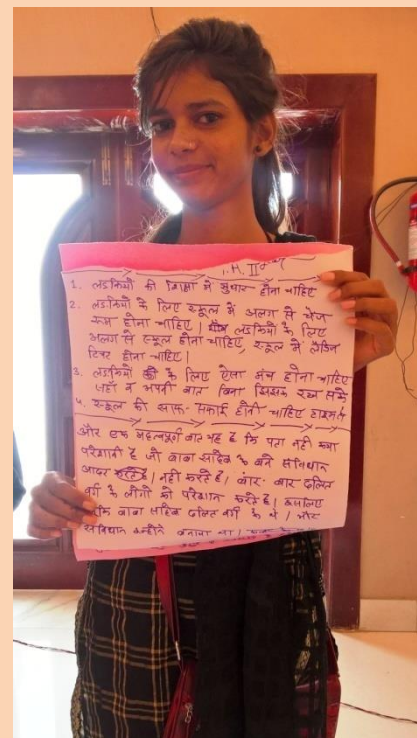
The discussion began with introducing each other in a joyful manner. Vikram Singh, moderator of the group asked a question to the group regarding importance of education.

“How does education help us?” asked Vikram Singh. And then there were answers raining. “It helps us in learning” said one, “We can achieve our goal through education” said the other. All children agreed that education is very important for them and they will try to spread awareness in their villages regarding education. Although most of the children seemed to be unsatisfied with the education system and the kind of facilities they get in their village and community. Most of them complained about lack of secondary school in the village and playground in schools.

Major issues and demands:

- Provision of senior secondary school at village level
- Playground and sports facility in schools

- Girls to be allowed to participate in sports
- Awareness regarding right to education
- Elimination of child marriage and child labour
- Harassment free environment in schools and in community
- Proper distribution of sanitary napkins and a changing room in schools
- Provision of library and computer lab in schools
- Police station at village
- Sufficient staff in schools
- Legal awareness camps to be conducted in villages from time to time
- Prevention of female infanticide and foeticide
- Prevention of dowry system
- Education for all; no discrimination on sex, caste and religion
- Proper health services
- Safe and secure environment for children in schools and in community





GROUP FIVE

This group consisted of 15 children with 10 girls and 5 boys. Dr. Nishant Arun, moderator of the group introduced a fun based activity in which all the children enjoyed. Then he introduced various styles of clapping. This created a comfortable and just environment for children where they were ready to share their thoughts.

It was decided to make some norms for the discussion and they were like- to help each other, to listen carefully, to take notes and to ask questions. All agreed.

A girl from a village near Punjab border told that they have a school in their village with normal facilities but they lack teacher for Punjabi language which the school offers. She also added that although their school has a big playground but only boys are allowed to play. Girls are not allowed to play outdoor games. “There is no facility of drinking water in our school” said a boy from a village in Ganganagar district. Three children said that their school do not have computer lab and library.

Dr. Nishant Arun asked the children to take a 2 minutes break and then to discuss on the issues of family and community.

Discussing on the family issues most of the children agreed that their opinion is not sought on family matters. In family and in community their voice is not considered.

Major issues and demands:

- Senior secondary school in villages
- Graduate college in village
- Proper teaching staff in schools
- Playground and sports facility in schools
- Harassment free environment in school and community
- Participation of children in decision-making in family, school and panchayats
- Girls allowed to play outdoor games
- Elimination of child marriage
- Proper planning in education system
- No child labour
- No corporal punishment
- Health care system to be improved
- Mother care system to be improved
- Empowerment of women





SESSION TWO

After the group discussions it was time for the next session where all the children gathered at the hall to discuss and to share the issues and problems. Some specially able (Deaf and dumb) children also joined the session. Priya Shekhawat played the role of the moderator who is an expert in sign language.

At first all students were supposed to draw their dreams on a sheet. Pencils and colours were provided to them. All children very enthusiastically drew their dreams on the sheet and coloured them.

It was, now time for the discussion with the specially able children. These children raised a few issues which they face in their family, school and society.

Some of the major issues raised:

- Being specially able they are not cared for properly
- It is very difficult to communicate in school, hospitals and in community
- They need attention and proper guidance



SESSSION THREE

(Day Two)

Day two began with a special session where experts on child psychology, educationists and eminent social workers were invited to listen to children's voice. Arvind Ojha of URMUL Trust, Sushila Ojha, former professor of English and kavita Manglani, child psychology practitioner graced the occasion.

Sushila Ojha began the session with a story of a temple and light. Through the story she conveyed that every child needs to become that light of enlightenment. She also shared her experience about working with children.

This was followed by a question answer round where children asked the questions to the experts. Answering to a question why girls are not allowed to move freely outside, Sushila Ojha replied that security is a major issue with parents. Most of the parents think it unsafe for girls to move or stay outside for long. She also added that now with education things are changing.

A boy asked a question on how he can get more children to school. Replying to this Sushila Ojha said that we need to have dialogues with parents and the community. Panchayats must organize educational awareness camps.

Arvind Ojha shared an example from a group of girls in Bihar. According to him “This is a story about a group of girls in Bihar. One of the girls was supposed to enter into child marriage. Hearing this the group met and decided to meet her parents. When parents did not listen to them they went on strike at the girl’s house. They sat there for many days until the matter was resolved.” He added that we all need to work collectively and resolve our issues together.

Kavita Mangalani discussed the provisions of POCSO act and asked the girls to speak up. She also discussed the issue of child marriage.

One important question was raised by a boy who asked, “why there are different age criteria for marriage for boys and girls?”Replying to this Arvind Ojha said that it has been a custom in our society that the boy marrying a girl should be older, although it is an ill-custom.

Shiv Nayal ended the session with his speech. In his speech he said that it is necessary in a democratic society to have dialogues and conversations. We need to talk on our issues and let the government know about them.



CHARTER OF DEMANDS

1. 43% of the population of Rajasthan is under 18 years of age, which is approximately half of the total population. But the total budget allocated for children is only 18%; which should be increased.
2. Schools should be open in every village and all children must have access to them.
3. In Bikaner division some of the villages are situated near Pakistan border and lack educational facility. Their lives are disturbed due to defense movement. Government must prepare a policy for such villages.
4. Sanitary napkin distribution system needs to be improved.
5. Proper training programme should be conducted for police personnel regarding various child related acts such as Child marriage, POCSO, Child Labour etc.
6. Being desert area there is a scarcity of water, proper arrangements should be made for safe drinking water in schools and community.
7. Toilets in schools and community should be properly managed.
8. Political representatives should be sensitive towards child related issues.
9. 'Bal-Sabha' to be regularly organized at Panchayats.
10. Proper arrangements to be made for the girls in schools regarding sanitary napkins and changing rooms.

LIST OF PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

- URMUL TRUST
- UNICEF
- RESOURCE INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
- RAJASTHAN RTE FORUM
- GIRLS NOT BRIDES
- SAVE THE CHILDREN
- PLAN INTERNATIONAL
- ACTIONAID
- WORLD VISION
- CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE, BIKANER
- And various schools..

