

DASHAM

PARTICIPATION OF
CHILDREN IN
DEMOCRACY

TWO DAY REGIONAL WORKSHOP IN JODHPUR

URMUL TRUST

2018

HOTEL SIDDHARTH INTERNATIONAL, JODHPUR



JODHPUR

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”.*¹

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 Siddharth International, Jodhpur on 8th and 9th 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.

¹ Children and Democracy, Maya Carlson, Felton Earls and Clotilde Fonseca, <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/children-and-democrac>



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. Arvind Ojha of URMUL Trust initiated the discussion by focusing on the necessity 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. Mahesh of Sandhan Organization talked about working together and to reach to some concrete conclusions. 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



DAY ONE

SESSION ONE

ICE-BREAKING

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. Arvind Ojha of URMUL Trust welcomed all and expected everyone to contribute towards fulfilling of the objectives of the workshop.

Mahesh, Shiv Naya, Priya Shekhawatl 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.

Mahesh of Sandhan organization engaged children in a short play. All children participated in the play which was related to leadership and education. After the play all sang a song 'Azaadi' along with Mahesh and other volunteers.



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	Vinita	Sita Panwar
2	Kriti and Neeraj	Bhanwari
3	Mahesh	Monika
4	Shiv Nayal	Pooni
5	Dr. Nishant Arun	Hothiram

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 began their discussion with introducing themselves. Vinita and Sita Panwar talked to children and created the atmosphere comfortable. Children were ready to share their ideas and issues.

Vinita- moderator of the group introduced the broad objectives of the workshop. She asked everyone to participate and to share their ideas and experiences of the school and community. Two children talked about lack of sports facility in their school. Although Sita Panwar of URMUL Trust said that some of the girls are playing Handball at district level which is a good sign.

Most of the girls 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 was that 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.

Major issues and demands:

- Need for better facilities at schools
- Female teachers at school
- Sports facility at schools
- Cleanliness and hygiene in schools
- Proper distribution of sanitary napkins
- Need for changing rooms in schools
- Elimination of child marriage
- Health facility to be improved



GROUP TWO

Kriti and Bhanwari- moderators of the group began with introduction. Neeraj from Save The Children also helped them. They were asked to use an adjective before their name while introducing. All introduced themselves, enjoyed and soon the atmosphere was friendly and comfortable.

Moderators discussed about the importance of education. They asked the children whether know the tables in Maths and asked them to play a game of tables where they will recite the tables they know. Some of the children replied with tables up to seven while one boy knew the tables up to eleven.

Further in the discussion a boy told about the facility of a gym in their school. He told that most of the boys go to gym while girls do not go. A girl told that they have good facility regarding sports in school and both boys and girls play. Neeraj asked whether girls play cricket and the reply from a girl was NO. She said parents do not allow us to play any outdoor games. Most of the children go to school yet they do not have computer lab and library facilities.

Major issues and demands:

- Proper sports facility at school
- No discrimination on the base on caste, religion and gender
- Toilets in all schools
- Cleanliness and hygiene
- 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



GROUP THREE

Mahesh, moderator of the group began with the introduction. The he discussed the objectives of the workshop. Mahesh told them since the elections in the state of Rajasthan are coming we need to raise our voice and let the political representatives know our problems. Mahesh added that we all need to discuss upon education, security, future, health and hygiene.

One of the child told that he lives at a hilly area in Sirohi. Due to hilly area the basic facilities like health and education are not there. Government should provide these facilities at the hilly areas in Sirohi district. One girl from Jodhpur told that Panchayat representatives never consider their problems and have never visited their area. Another child from Baap said that their community is very poor and they have sold their land to government for the purpose of solar system. He added that they do not have community toilets, schools and hospitals in their locality. Most of the girls demanded their voice to be considered by Panchayats.

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:

- No discrimination based on religion, caste and gender.
- Schools at village level with proper arrangements of toilets, changing room, sports facility etc.
- All children must be enrolled in school
- Cleanliness and hygiene
- Liquer shops not to be open near schools and hospitals
- Female sports teacher to be appointed in schools
- 104 toll free number to be responsive
- Senior Secondary schools at block level
- 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. Shiv Nayal, moderator of the group introduced himself and the team. He then discussed the objectives of the workshop.

Shiv Nayal talked about education and asked the children to speak up about the problems that they face in schools and in community. Most of the children shared that they do not have secondary schools in their locality and hence they need to go very far for such schools. Most of the girls drop-out after primary education.

Discussing on the issue of child marriage many children accepted that their community practices child marriage. Although children said they want education and plan for the future.

All children agreed that education is very important for them and they will try to spread awareness in their villages regarding education.

Major issues and demands:

- Provision of senior secondary school at village level
- Playground and sports facility in schools
- 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
- Prevention of female infanticide and feticide
- Education for all; no discrimination on sex, caste and religion
- Proper health services



GROUP FIVE

Dr. Nishant Arun, moderator of the group introduced a fun based activity in which all the children enjoyed. Renuka and Hothiram from URMUL Trust helped the group. 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.

Dr. Nishant Arun requested all to share their issues about themselves, their school and the society. One of the girls told that their school has sports facility and she is a playes of Vollyball at national level. But she wants that all girls should get a chance to play in schools. One of the girl wanted to become an RAS officer but she lacked proper guidance. Another girl wished to be an IPS officer.

Most of the girls shared the ill-practice of child marriage in their community. One of the girl who herself was married at an early age said that I wish to work for the awareness against child marriage. Another girl in the group said although they have senior secondary school in their village

(Mt. Abu) but the school does not provide faculty for Science and Commerce. Most of the girls accepted that they have been a victim of eve-teasing while going to school. Dr. Nishant Arun discussed the POCSO Act with them.

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:

- Faculty of Science and Commerce to be introduced in senior secondary school in villages
- Graduate college in village
- Harassment free environment in school and community
- Participation of children in decision-making in family, school and panchayats
- Elimination of child marriage
- No corporal punishment
- Health care system to be improved
- Proper distribution of sanitary napkins



DAY TWO

SESSION ONE

Day two began with a song by Mahesh- “bade Nirale Hain Hum Log”.All children who were gathered in the hall sang the song. They all enjoyed it. Mahesh and Shiv Nayal also played some games with the children. This boosted up their energy and all children were ready for the work i.e. the discussion round.

Some specially able children also joined the session. Priya Shekhawat played the role of the moderator who is an expert in sign language. They formed a separate group to discuss the issues and problems they face in their life.



SESSION TWO

GROUP DISCUSSION

It was now time for the group discussions. Separate groups were created on the basis of school going girls, boys and specially able children.

The discussion with the specially able children was moderated by Priya Shekhawat. She introduced the objectives of the workshop in sign language and asked the children to share their thoughts and problems. 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

Another group of girls shared their thoughts with Sita Panwar of URMUL Trust. Kavita Manglani helped the children with her thoughts. Kavita told some of the myths related to menstruation period in girls, like:

- Not to touch drinking water
- Not to cook
- Not to play
- Not to use cosmetics
- Sleep separately

Kavita also discussed as how to be aware and understand the myths. She told that every girl needs to change herself first. We need to be an example for our family. Let the people know that menstruation is just a biological incident and has no relation with impurity or any other myth. All the girls seemed comfortable and took part in the discussion. The issues raised by girls were:

- Myths related to menstruation
- Harassment and eve-teasing
- Higher education at village level
- Employment
- End of child marriage

Group of boys shared their thoughts with Mahesh, Shiv Nayal and Dr. Nishant Arun. Boys demanded senior secondary school at their village and proper sports facility. They said they feel pressure of employment and would request to the government to consider their demands. Most of the boys agreed that they respect women and would never indulge in eve-teasing. Major issues raised by the group of boys were:

- Senior secondary school in their village
- Proper sports facility
- Higher education
- Career guidance
- Employment



SESSSION THREE

This was a session which all children enjoyed. All the children were supposed to draw and paint their dreams on a sheet. Paper and colours were provided to them. Children drew their dreams on paper. Some of them drew a school, some a hospital and some depicted themselves as police officer. All children enjoyed this session.



PANEL DISCUSSION

This was the last session of the workshop. A panel consisting of Arvind Ojha, Narendra (Actionaid), Shiv Nayal, Kavita Manglani and Dr. Nishant Arun was set up to discuss the issues raised by children. Many children asked the questions regarding problems in school like toilets, no changing rooms for girls, no secondary schools etc. The panel assured them to take their voice to the appropriate authority.

Narendra of Actionaid shared his experience of working with refugee children and how they lack educational and health facilities. Kavita Manglani and Dr. Nishant Arun discussed about specially able children and their potential. Arvind Ojha thanked all the participant children and organizations and assured a better future for children in the coming times.

This was followed by a group photograph session.



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 Jodhpur division some of the villages are situated at hilly areas and lack educational facility.
4. Sanitary napkin distribution system needs to be improved.
5. Toilets in schools and community should be properly managed.
6. Political representatives should be sensitive towards child related issues.
7. Proper arrangements to be made for the girls in schools regarding sanitary napkins and changing rooms.
8. Career guidance
9. Employment
10. Elimination of child marriage and child labour
11. Female staff at schools
12. No liquor shops near schools and hospitals
13. Degree college at block level

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..
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