

“AHIMSA at Child Rights Schools – Child Friendly Schools”

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Batch 3

Summary of the project

As part of the training programme a project on Child Rights Schools was started in the Kerala, Wayanad district, with the support of the Department of Education in 21 selected schools. The activities started in the pilot schools are:

- Training programmes for all teachers and headmasters.
- Creating of awareness programmes for parents.
- Forming of a self-government institution at school.

The Government declared Sasimala Upper Primary School in the Pulpally, Wayanad District as the first child friendly school in India on the 15th of August 2006 (India's Independence Day). The other 20 schools were also declared child friendly schools by September 2006 during a district level seminar.

The following programmes were implemented in the child friendly schools:

- Creating a student council where two students (one girl and one boy) from each division were selected counsellors.
- Suggestion/complaint boxes were installed in all schools.
- Monthly meetings of counsellors and teachers were set up in order to discuss the content of the suggestions/complaint box.
- Child Rights Committees were formed in the schools, which included students, teachers, parents and LSG members.
- A display board containing the fundamental values of the school was installed in every school: “This is a child friendly school,” “Each child has freedom of opinion,” “There are no corporal punishments in this school,” “No discrimination,” “Each child has the opportunity to take part in the curricular activities.”
- Teachers are conducting home visits in order to meet with children's families and to identify the background of every child.
- With the help of parents, the lunch programme has been modified to add more nutritious food.
- Every child is observing a daily ‘Amma Ariyan’ in order to facilitate interaction between the teachers and the children's mothers in matters related to studies and personal problems.

To continue with the project work, I sent a proposal to government of Kerala asking them to convert all the schools in my district (290 schools) into child friendly schools. The proposal was approved. Preparation of a CRC handbook for teachers has started. Providing the CRC training for all teachers in the district using the handbook is planned to start in March of 2008. Along with the members of Batch 4, we are also planning to conduct a national seminar on the CRC for the stakeholders of education from all the Indian states in order to disseminate the idea of how the implementation of the CRC will be conducted. The seminar will declare Wayanad as a Child Friendly District.

For the academic year of 2008-09, I have proposed to extend the project to all other districts in Kerala with the help of the Department of Education and other departments. It is also proposed the inclusion of child rights in the school curriculum of Kerala. As a change agent, it is my ambition that the rights of each child in India are protected.

Impact on the personal and professional levels

Mathew Zacharias

I had the opportunity to participate in the international training programme on Child Rights and School Management organized by Sida, Phase I in Sweden and Phase II in Honduras. This training programme affected my personal and professional life in matters related to child rights. I have taken a strong decision to act as the 'voice' of children. After the Janeeva convention the government of India is trying to implement steps to protect child rights through various programmes. But in many states, including Kerala, the rights of the child are not well protected or the idea is not implemented under its true sense in the society. No State has succeeded in providing enough importance to child rights in the school curriculum.

Nalini Juneja

While I was in Lund, I came to realize that the most visible indicator of child rights in schools is the way in which children are treated - if they are not subjected to corporal punishment or if they participate in the decisions affecting them. Since then, I have been writing papers and speaking against corporal punishment in schools. In the future, I also plan to work on the right to participation. Although I had been conducting training programmes and workshops on the right to education, including the issue of corporal punishment, I am now focusing on the rights *in* education as well.

Preetha Bhakta

When I came back from Lund I realized that over the years, while the government has made increasing commitments in financial terms towards school education in the primary sector, the outcome in terms of quality education has been quite a

failure, even if primary education is a fundamental right in the country. Working in the area of primary education in a non-for-profit organisation, I planned to work in strengthening of children's learning and the designing of a classroom process that avoids punishment as part of the process. I believed that if the learning process is to be made interesting for children, corporal punishment should be avoided so children can become active participants in learning rather than passive receivers. Globally and nationally, child rights have attained the space, acknowledgement and respect they deserve and a reflection of this concern is found in the 2nd Millennium Development Goal: Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015 and the World Bank paper "Reaching Out to The Child," which affirms: "The importance of ensuring optimal development of children, who are a nation's wealth, is based on the view that more than the economic growth, it is the development of human capability in its population that makes a nation prosper. This implies that people's lives improve when they are free from illness, when they are well nourished and literate, have self-respect...and freedom of choice. And the process of developing these aspects of human capability begins in the earliest years of life, in early childhood."

Impact on the organizational level

Mathew Zacharias

At the time of the training programme, I was working as the District Project Officer, SSA Wayanad, in quality improvement programme in primary and upper primary education established by the government of India. I was the person responsible for the training of teachers in the district. I have included the CRC in all the training programmes. At the moment, as a Senior Lecturer at DIET Wayanad (District Institute of Education and Training), I try to do my best to incorporate the CRC in all the training programmes for teachers.

Nalini Juneja

One of my ambitions at the institutional level is to run programmes similar to the Child Rights programme, preferably in collaboration with Lund University. In principle, this was agreed by my organisation and it was discussed during the visit of our mentor. However, his visit coincided with the transformation of the institution into a university and the Vice Chancellor decided to hold all changes for a period of a year or two. Therefore, the issue of collaboration has not been revisited, although I did write to my mentor seeking for collaboration in research.

This year I was able to hold a one-week workshop (January 14-18, 2008) on "Management of Child rights *to* and *in* education". The output of the workshop was the preparation of a number of 'research agendas' and 'action agendas' to further the right to education. Since then, there have been requests for similar workshops to be conducted by our institute at the state level. Dr. Madhumita and

I, having participated in the Lund University Education Programme, are now jointly teaching in the programme: “Education Democracy and Human Rights”. Hopefully, this will lead to the development of a team to run the annual training programme on management of child rights.

Preetha Bhakta

I am leading a national group that looks into the design, strategy and development of training modules for primary education in government schools with the objective of improving the quality of education in the public schools system. The group is working to eradicate poverty, enhancing the quality of life of the marginalized and less privileged through the creation of improved access to quality education, health and nutrition. Naandi (the organization) derives its Child Rights mission from the same principles and focuses its interventions on enhancing the life chances of every child born in the country by ensuring she has equal access to such environments, structures and services in the realm of education, health and nutrition.

There are two of us, who participated in the programme at Lund University, working with this education programme in 4 states of India. We have developed children clubs and facilitated children’s organizations within schools and villages to enhance the quality of their education, making it more learning than teaching oriented. We have also included Child Rights as one of the aspects in our staff training components. We are trying to develop these methods and train schools teachers in order to mainstream these ideas in a larger number of schools.

Impact on the country level

Mathew Zacharias

The Government of India is taking serious measures to implement child rights:

- Child labour is now illegal.
- Corporal punishment is also banned by court orders.

Nalini Juneja

Due to my work in the area of child rights and education and my new interest in working against corporal punishment, I have been made a member of a National Working Group on Corporal Punishment set up by the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights. My subgroup is in charge of looking into the need for new legislation and institutional mechanisms to prevent corporal punishment. The group report has to be handed in next week and I am busy working on it. There have been training programmes conducted by our university where I was able to address the issue of child rights with influential policy makers in education from all parts of the country.

Preetha Bhakta

At the country level, I have started working in four different states and in about 1800 schools. We are working with the State's Education Board in order to implement our work in many schools across these states.