



# NAVAJEEVAN BALA BHAVAN VIJAYAWADA

(A home for Children in need of care and Protection)

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## NON INSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES

### PRESENCE ON THE PLATFORM/BUS TERMINUS

Trained former street children are being deployed by some NGOs like NJBB in Vijayawada, Butterflies in Delhi, among others to identify children and youth who have run away and are lost in the new ambience. Such early identification and assistance of shelter, food and counselling enables rapid reunion with the families. Several stations now host a Childline facility which makes it easier for street level workers to link the child with service providers. High level co-ordination meetings of NGOs with Railway authorities and the Railway Protection Force has brought about a benign attitude among them toward runaway children, though some officials have difficulties with NGOs. "NGOs never came to us with a clear plan or strategy on how to work with these children – they only come when we arrest any child in any deviant activity. Sometimes they approach our higher officials; they are not bridging the gap rather widening it between them and us. But still we are ready to join hands with them. Please suggest us what to do," said, Mr. Sharma, SHO, and RPF-Nizamuddin Railway Station. Temporary shelters with caring and concerned staff are being made available to the children near the stations.

### Child Safety Net

Child Safety project targets institutional measures through an Integrated Child Rights Approach to enable children and adults to promote and advocate child rights, with a special emphasis on girl children. The first phase covers in ten villages of Penamaluru Mandal of Krishna District, AP. It is to be replicated in 50 Mandals of the district in three years. It was initiated by the district administration; NJBB designed and implemented it. It has a field co-ordinator with five community workers from NJBB. All the other activists are volunteers from the village communities. The project is integrated in the sense that both adults and children become key stakeholders in the process; it is inclusive of weaker sections; its objectives are to bring about a healthy community by people's monitoring of basic services (water supply, sanitation, proper implementation of development schemes and to eradicate extreme poverty – by ensuring employment under the MGNREGS – prevent HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, child mortality and malnutrition) while simultaneously striving to achieve universal primary education and reducing the number of child workers and preventing child abuse and elimination of neglect of girl children by promoting gender equality and empowering women through Self Help Groups.

The preliminary studies undertaken before the launch of 'Child Safety Net' (CSN) project, the two decade of experience of Navajeevan Bala Bhavan in the area of Child Welfare and Child Rights in and around the city of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh and the various surveys generated by it, prompted Navajeevan to initiate 'Child Safety Net' programme in Krishna district with a view to develop a replicable model by developing sustainable institutional measurers in a village for preventing any sort of child abuse (including physical and sexual violence, exploitation by trafficking and employing child in hazardous works detrimental to childhood and without providing opportunity for quality education and forcing the child many a time to run away from the family) and for creating an enabling environment by ensuring the protection of each child and his/her overall development on an equitable basis in the respective village.

### The underlying Strategy:

The underlying principle is to promote and practice 'Integrated Child Rights Approach' to realize the dream of a Child Friendly Village.

The whole concept is geared to equip these children and activists at village level, as part of Integrated Child Rights Approach and building Knowledge-Based Caring Communities, with the information and skills on various legislations and government programmes/schemes who in turn enable the marginalized families/communities to organize, demand and access their rights and entitlements.

NJBB realized the importance of involving itself actively in the practice of rights based approach in its interventions. The promotion and protection of Child Rights or the implementation of JJ Act and other child related Acts and the safety of a child in a child care institution, etc. cannot be seen in isolation but as interwoven with the implementation of other legislations and the government schemes being implemented in the village. The primary objective of any intervention 26 Save the child by leading him/her to Navajeevan. Sponsor the child to realize his/her dream. In the village is to equip activists and the members of children Parliament with information and skills on legislations and schemes – who in turn will enable other members of the

village to organize, demand and access their rights and entitlements as part of Integrated Child Rights Approach to realize the dream of a Child friendly village.

Also, the families are facilitated to obtain various basic life documents for children – birth certificates, death certificates of the parents of the orphans, enrolment in ration cards, etc.

In the whole process, special emphasis is being given to the children of the most vulnerable and marginalized, socially-economically-politically excluded sections of the society, for instance, SCs and STs, and to the girl children among them.

#### **Launching of “Child Safety Net” in Krishna District:**

On an experimental basis, after the preliminary studies, CSN project was launched, on 23rd July 2008, in 10 villages of Penamaluru mandal, Krishna district, in collaboration with the district administration and the Forum for Child Rights Vijayawada (where NJBB is an active founding member. The Forum is also responsible for the running of CHILDLINE Vijayawada). The aim was to implement the following, with an Integrated Child Rights Approach:

1. Create awareness among the personnel of the local child care institutions and their children in particular and the village communities in general, about the UN convention on child rights (right to Survival, Protection, Development and Participation with the underlying principles of ‘the best interest of the child’ and ‘non-discrimination’) and standards of child protection laid by the government especially in context of adolescent girls.
2. Facilitate mechanisms to monitor the functioning of these institutions to prevent all forms of violence, including verbal abuse, harassment, physical violence, emotional abuse and sexual violence and exploitation, against children, especially girl-children.
3. Evolve and facilitate the implementation of programmes to ensure enrolment and retention of all children, especially girl-children, with a special emphasis on the marginalized families/communities.
4. Facilitate the local schools and all the other child care institution of these villages to formulate guidelines/code of conduct for all school staff and students in and around their premises.
5. Ensure that the local schools have sex-segregated toilets and washrooms, secure dormitories, supervised playgrounds and sport fields and adequate security in and around the premises.
6. Advocate the rights of the children, especially girl-children, when their rights are violated and provide support for the child-victims and their families – including counseling, medical treatment, legal follow-up.
7. Facilitate awareness creation and practical measures thereof towards materializing the cross-cutting themes, such as, mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS concerns, gender mainstreaming and social inclusion.
8. To establish linkages to lobby with the government for enactment/implementation of child-friendly legislations, schemes and equitable procedures.

#### **The Organizational Structure of Child Safety Net (CSN):**

Children Parliaments (CPs) is the first circle of SCN, at the village level, with children between 12 and 18 years. (Children between 6 and 12 years are engaged in cultural/sports activities as part of motivating and training them to be members CPs in future). There are more than 50% girl children. It is governed by written by-laws, with Cabinet Ministers and Speaker, duly elected after the required trainings in conducting parliaments and their respective duties, and formally introduced to the village Panchayath/elders. There is also an annual membership fee, prescribed by the by-laws (eg. Rs.1/-) and monthly savings (eg. Rs.2/-) - with developed fiscal/internal control mechanisms to administer the collected amounts in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner.

As a first step towards the formation of these Children Parliaments, Evening Tuition Centres (ETCs) are launched in the target communities with community participation. The whole strategy of strengthening the existing CPs as well as extending them to new areas is focused on the effective organization of ETCs for the school going children.

It all started with the request from some CPs in Penamaluru mandal, during their meetings last year, to have evening tuition centres to support the children – many of whom are children of workers or school-drop-outs - in their studies after school hours. The original plan was, as part of retention strategy for the enrolled children, to have one evening tuition centre per target village with the partial support from the project of Rs.500/- towards the honorarium of the evening tuition teacher cum activist, while the respective community supports the remaining expenses towards hall rent, electricity, stationery, etc., which may come up to another Rs.500/. Far beyond expectation, it caught the imagination of parents and community elders, who came forward generously to support the centres to support not only one centre but more centres, as the table below indicates. Indeed, the ETC concept, firstly put forward by the children themselves, just ‘touched the skin’. Rather than a mere project activity, the parents and children along with community elders realized that it was their need!

Strategically speaking, apart from helping children in their studies and individual follow-up, the evening tuition centres are the hub of all the CSN activities undertaken at village level by the members of Children’s Parliament and activist group – the evening tuition centres functioning as CSN local area office cum information centres, rescue of child workers and activities of antichild-trafficking, activities against domestic violence, referral services for children infected/ affected by HIV/AIDS, places for village / slum cluster level trainings on child rights, low cost nutrition, growing of kitchen garden, children cultural meets, environment

friendly measures, etc. The tuition teacher also helps in the facilitation of CPs along with activists. These evening tuition centres thus also ensure to a great extent the sustainability of CPs and other institutional measures envisaged under the present project.

Activists Group (AG). This is the second circle of CSN, supportive of CPs, which consists of adult Child Rights activists acting as General Body. This body will elect 3 office bearers (President, Secretary and Treasurer) at the village level, with minimum 50% women membership. This too has an annual membership fee, prescribed by the by-laws (eg.: Rs.10/-) with developed fiscal/internal control mechanisms to administer the collected amounts in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner. Activists Group, committed to the cause of child rights, is to take responsibility to facilitate Children Parliaments on sustainable basis even after the completion of the project.

Village level Child Protection Committees (CPCs) consist of 3 members of AGs (with minimum one female member). Its main task is to visit and monitor all the Child Care Institutions of the village, with written guidelines/checklists evolved and implemented separately for Anganwadis and Schools and Social Welfare Hostels, especially to monitor specific child rights violations, including sexual, physical, verbal abuse of children, child marriage, child labour, etc. The implementation of other service delivery mechanisms/public utility services, such as, sanitation, safe drinking water, road and street lights, primary health centre/immunization, various schemes, especially related to children, environment friendly measures, etc. too are reviewed from the perspective of 'Integrated Child Rights Approach' and building 'Knowledge-Based Caring Communities'. (It is always preferable that the elected office bearers of AGs also function as CPCs.)

The Cluster Resource Centre (CRC), which consists of committed Activists and children from 10 villages of a cluster (2 elected representatives of CPs (one female and one male), preferably from among cabinet ministers/speaker of village CPs), 2 elected representatives of AGs). Their task is to advocate and lobby the rights of the children. It has a requirement of a minimum of 50% women membership, with annual membership fee prescribed by the bylaws (eg; Rs.100/- paid by each Village). Its developed fiscal/internal control mechanisms administer the collected amounts in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner.

CRCs may later be bifurcated as Mandal Resource Centres (MRCs) once all villages of all mandals are covered under CSN. Also, CRCs/MRCs may later be confederated into District Resource Centres (DRCs). The present project does not however envisage those structures in this project phase, except holding of district level annual gatherings of CRCs.

#### **Strategy Summary - The Four Circles of Child Safety Net:**

The Innermost Circle of Children, represented by CPs – covering all the children of the village – is the safe and secure zone of children in a village.

This Inner Circle is protected, sustained and facilitated by the Outer Circle (the circle of positive stakeholders), consisting of AGs, CPCs, monitoring the functioning of the Child Care Institutions and other basic services/facilities of the village, community facilitators, youth, village elders, PRIs, officials of government line departments. It is supportive of protecting the Rights of the children, the Innermost Circle.

Those in the Outer Circle, with a proactive, and when required, with confrontational approach, promote the Rights of the Children and advocate their rights among those in the Third Circle (the circle of negative stakeholders). The latter are either indifferent to the Rights of the children/Innermost Circle or violates these rights (abusing/exploiting children physically, verbally, mentally/ emotionally, economically and sexually). Putting it symbolically, this is thus the field of indifferent/lethargic and negative stakeholders, depicting the battle zone – the grassroots level lobby and advocacy. One of the success indicators of the project is thus the decreasing number of negative stakeholders by increasing the number of positive stakeholders.

Those in the Outer Circle, in their struggle to protect and advocate Child rights, is supported by those in the Outermost Circle – the CRCs in collaboration with the District Resource Centre (DRC) and likeminded Organizations/Networks/Activists – by way of technical support, lobby and advocacy especially whenever a major issue erupts in the Third Circle which cannot be tackled by those alone in the Outer Circle.

Children as Media Producers' (CAMP): A batch of 18 members of various Children Parliaments under Navajeevan's 'Child Safety Net' participated in UNICEF sponsored training CAMP. In all seven categories, the children produced 17 short documentaries on issues related to their villages. They themselves made the script and shot them. The team attended the final two-day programme at Hyderabad, and came back with flying colours – with 3 awards: 2 for Self-Employment and Health and Hygiene categories. The most appreciated film was that of 'Plastic pollution'. Seeing the film, some of the village members have already started taking action against the usage of plastics. Our children also bagged the State level overall award. Now, Navajeevan has taken the policy of continuing CAMP productions and use visual medium to highlight the issues of children and their villages by children themselves.

More than half of the members of children parliaments are given preliminary lessons in Life Skills cum Sexual Health Education. There is a strong team of 25 child facilitators who are organizing trainings for other children. The child facilitators play an important and active role in organizing and conducting these trainings; also, in CAMP trainings.

### Replication:

The implementation of Child Safety Net project since then has made its impact in the district. The collaboration by the District Administration continued even under Mr. Peeyush Kumar, who was collector until March 2011. This is evident from the fact that he took it as model to be replicated in all the villages. He in fact moved its personnel, especially that of DRDA and started training them with the resource persons from Navajeevan.

The District Collector also invited Navajeevan in November 2010 to take a lead role in replicating the model in Vijayawada Urban and elicited support from the present Municipal Commissioner to carry it out along with Indira Kranthi Padhakam (Urban) cum NCLP Project Director K Shiva Shankar Rao. Two round consultations are already over with various line departments and NGOs in this regard.

This apart, at the moment, some NGOs, like APSS, RIEDS, World Vision, etc. have started replicating the CSN project in their respective operational areas. Also, a number of teams from GOs and NGOs from other districts within the State as well as from outside the State came for exposure visit to the project.

Preliminary activities of area mapping, initiation of ETCs, identifying adult activities, etc., have been undertaken in at least 16 mandals, in active collaboration with APSS, RIEDS, World Vision, Bala Vikasa, Praja Shakti Vidya Sangham, Lead India, Need, Vasavya, etc. and GOs (IKP, DRDA, etc.)

### In sum:

These measures help enabling children and elders of target village communities, to a great extent, to promote and advocate rights of each child, on an equitable and inclusive basis, with a special emphasis on girl-children.

Various project measures considered together under CSN project, such as, ETCs, formation and strengthening of Children Parliaments and Adult Activists groups, Child Facilitators, CAMP, etc., paved way for many children, especially girl children to get stabilized in regular schooling and to pursue higher education, including professional courses.

The self-confidence of the children, especially of girl children, has been enhanced, which is evident from the fact that there is now increased mobility for girl children than before the project interventions. This is evident from the enhanced presence of girl children in ETCs; Back To School campaign and awareness measures on the prevention of child marriages, the rescue for child workers; the increased membership of girl children in CPs as well as in identifying and representing the child related issues to the concerned authorities, etc.

CSN project implementation has effected in the growing number of these children, especially girl children, becoming child rights defenders.

The case is not different with Adult Activists Groups/Child Protection Committees under Child Safety Net, supporting the children to address child related issues, where 72% of the activists are women.

The project interventions in general have contributed considerably towards the reduction of school dropouts, especially girl children, in the pilot villages.

### EXCERPTS FROM CSN:

**‘Back to School’ fortnight campaign (Vidya Paksholsavalu):** The members of Children Parliaments of 10 villages of Penamaluru mandal under Child Safety Net project got actively involved in ‘Back to School’ fortnight campaign organized by the government at the beginning of the academic year 2013-2014 in the 3rd and 4th week of June. They went around the 10 villages of Penamaluru and 23 slum communities in Vijayawada rural and urban mandals, speaking in community meetings and distributing leaflets. During the campaign, 13 child workers were rescued and enrolled in local schools. Not only has it created awareness among the parents of the marginalized communities/families about the need of enrolling and retaining children in regular schools, but has also resulted in awakening the members of the public to call the Childline to rescue child workers.

**Chalivendram (Free Cold Water Distribution Centre):** The members of Swayam Krushi Children Parliament of Poranki village mobilized local resources and built a hut and purchased articles to distribute cold water freely to the passers by to beat the scorching heat in summer. The centre was in function during summer from 3rd May to 10th June 2011 until the rains came down. This act of the local Children Parliament was praised much by the village Panchayath, school management, other elders and the local media.

**Cases represented to Child Welfare Committee (CWC):** In the month of March 2011, the members of Vanakuru Children Parliament referred to CWC 3 semi-orphans (2 girl-children and 1 boy-child) of most marginalized families, who were not

attending school. The CWC in turn referred them to Navajeevan. The two girl-children and the boy-child, now housed in Sethu and Mettu Bridge schools, are preparing well for regular schooling in the next academic year.

**Action against Anti-Social Elements:** Prathibha Evening Tuition Centre at Vanukuru village started functioning in the village community hall in the month of March 2011, which was lying vacant and was used by anti-social elements until then. Even after the launching of the tuition centre, the hooligans continued to disturb the centre with their anti-social activities. The cabinet of the Children Parliament along with the activists made a complaint to the village president, Mr. Murali, who took immediate action along with other elders. Thanks to their efforts, children, especially girls, now happily attend study hours at the tuition centre without any fear. On 29th March 2011, the tuition centre celebrated its first anniversary in the presence of village elders with children mobilizing the resources.

**Children as Media Producers' (CAMP):** Launched in 2010, the trained children under CAMP continue the video documentation and use visual medium to highlight the issues of children of Child Safety Net target villages.

**Prevention of child marriage:** In 2013 too, two cases of child marriage had been identified by the members of children parliament at Tadigadapa and prevented it with the support of the members of Adult Activists Group of the village and the concerned line departments especially the Women and Child Welfare Dept and the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC).

**Monitoring of Anganwadis:** Members of Children Parliaments and activists groups under Child Safety Net (CSN) project continue their monitoring of village Anganwadis (play schools) and address the corrupt practices of the Anganwadi personnel and took measures to ensure proper and timely delivery of services and goods to the eligible.

**Mobilization of local resources:** Members of Children Parliaments continue to mobilize local resources from their respective village elders to render educational and medical support for their peers; support for victims of two fire accidents, evening tuition centres which help a lot in retaining child-workers/outof-school children enrolled in local schools, etc. For instance, the members of Children Parliaments along with the members of Adult Activists Groups (AAGs) of Penamaluru mandal could mobilize Rs.2,15,282/- (Rs.74,782/- in cash and Rs.1,40,500/- in kind) – an encouraging sign towards the sustainability of the project measures established under CSN project in a village.

**Support for Children Affected By AIDS (CABA):** A total of 334 children (181 boys and 153 girls), including 9 infected children (3 boys and 6 girls), of 200 families, with 186 infected adults (112 males and 74 females), of the 33 CSN target villages/slum communities, identified by the members of the Children Parliaments and Activists Groups/Child Protection Committees, are being facilitated to obtain various services from the government facilities, including ART, other than the support given by Navajeevan. Apart from bi-monthly nutrition support to 99 PLHAs (14 males and 85 females), 200 affected children (97 boys and 103 girls) are being partially supported by Navajeevan for their education. Some of the children orphaned by AIDS are also admitted to Navajeevan Group Care Homes, while emphasizing the family based care of CABA.

**Identifying cases of domestic violence:** Members of children parliaments continue their support in identifying the cases of domestic violence and reporting to adult activists of the respective village. They are the ones who mainly spread awareness among the village communities about the existence of Hitaishi – the Women/Girl Children Empowerment wing of Navajeevan which follow-up such cases under Domestic Violence Act.

**Orphan Certificates:** The members of AGs facilitated Orphan Certificates for more than 90 children, 64 for them CABA. The said certificate makes them eligible to access benefits under reservation categories – education, medical, job placements, etc. – irrespective of their Caste status.

**Akshara Bridge School for Children of Chenchu Tribal Community:** Enrolling children of Chenchu tribal community settled in Penamaluru mandal was an uphill task. All efforts in the past by NGOs, GOs and elected leaders proved futile. But it was not the case with the Akshara Bridge School organized by the Adult Activists Group and CSN project team of the village. After one year of intensive preparation through bridge course and regular family follow-ups, 28 of the 35 out-of-school children of this most derived community were enrolled in regular school in June 2012 for the first time. Till date, all of them are being retained in the local school, thanks to the constant individual follow-up by the local AAG.

**Building Caring Communities:** As part of extending CSN project in urban slum communities of Vijayawada, 'Building Caring Communities' has been undertaken by the project team in collaboration with YaR network. As part, different Caring Groups like Auto Drivers, Railway Porters, Hotel Workers, Rickshaw Pullers, Rag Shop Owners, Adult Domestic Workers, etc. have been formed. The immediate outcome is that these groups start rescuing street and trafficked children and referring them to Navajeevan shelter, CWC/ Childline, etc.

**Youth Parliament:** As part of CSN, a Youth Parliament is functional at Autonagar Industrial Estate, consisting of Child Workers above 15 years. The members are trained in child rights, especially their rights at work place; also, in life skills cum sexual health. The objective is to facilitate them to advocate their rights by themselves with the employers and address the rights violation in collaboration with the AAGs.