
PRESS RELEASE

South and Central Asia Seminar on “CELEBRATING PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS AND BOYS... LOOKING AHEAD”

***Organised by
Save the Children Sweden, Regional Programme for South and Central Asia
in collaboration with Save the Children Canada, Asia Regional Office
6th – 9th June 2006, Kathmandu, Nepal***

About the Seminar

Children are active citizens of both today and tomorrow. Participation of children as a right has gained a momentum in South and Central Asia region in recent years. Many organizations recognize the importance of involving children and started working towards this. There are many examples of children being involved at different stages of programme/project cycle, influencing the decisions of school, families, communities and local government bodies. They also have been active advocates in informing the policies and programmes of governments and organizations.

But these good examples often go unnoticed or are ignored due to either lack of financial or human implications in documentation or the size of the organisations. With this seminar, Save the Children intends to create a platform to share the work on participation of children, to bring these experiences together and learn from them. The seminar will help organisations, networks, academia and children build linkages to mainstream participation of children in the broader arena. It will identify key challenges in moving forward and strategies to strengthen meaningful participation of children. Above all, the seminar will seek to mainstream child rights issues and participation of children into other broader movements in South and Central Asia region.



The seminar will also be a platform for the launch of a regional film on ‘children’s actions on violence against girls and boys, which details motivating examples of children’s involvement in improving their lives. A publication on ‘Bal Panchayats in Maharashtra, India’ will also be launched at the seminar. The document particularly looks at restrictions and challenges in furthering child participation at the village level.

The seminar brings forth different approaches to involve children in programmes and issues related to their lives. Special emphasis is placed on meaningful and ethical practice of child participation. The seminar will highlight some key issues in the arena of child participation such as the involvement of adults, work with younger children, participation in families and building networks and alliances to further child participation. It will help the participants to plan their future strategies to strengthen child participation in South and Central Asia region.

About the Film

Children's Actions to end Violence against Girls and Boys

A Regional Film, 17 minutes

Produced by Save the Children Sweden, Regional Programme for South and Central Asia

Violence against children is very common in South and Central Asia, just as it is in the entire world. It occurs in varied situations, in different forms and degrees of severity. It may range from killing, torture, commercial exploitation and sexual abuse to a deliberate act of punishment or just the impulsive reaction of an irritated parent or teacher. Violence can be physical, sexual, psychological or deprivation and neglect.



Children's participation is crucial in addressing violence affecting them. This film brings together experiences of children who are taking action, to overcome challenges in their individual lives, in schools and in their communities. Children's action to end violence takes various forms. Children are using media to create awareness on violence. They are motivating and involving the community to join hands with them to end violence against children. Children are involving themselves in research on violence. They are advocating with the government to create laws to end violence against children. They are also participating in forums giving their recommendations to end violence against children.

These examples show that children have the power and potential to bring about a change in their lives, given the right kind of support. The film calls upon the parents, communities, governments and organisations to recognise and wake up to the reality that children are not passive receivers but social actors. The film encourages the adult community to involve children, listen to them and take their views seriously. Children do have a lot to offer, if only given a chance!

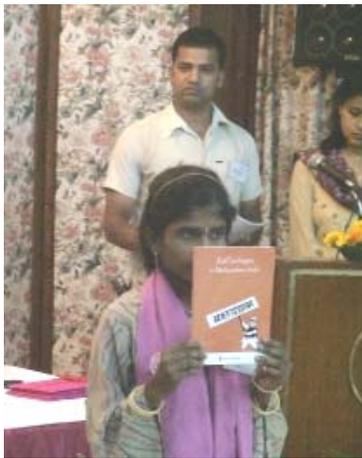
About the Publication

BAL PANCHAYATS in Maharashtra, India

An Initiative to Strengthen Children Participation at the Village Level

Published by Save the Children Canada, Asia Regional Office

This publication traces the journey of Save the Children Canada, Asia Regional Office's *Bal Panchayat* (a local self-governance group of girls and boys at the village level) project in Tuljapur block in Maharashtra, India. The project has been implemented in partnership with *Paryay*, a local NGO. The concept of *Bal Panchayat* is set within child participation. The project, which began with five villages, has now been extended to 55 villages, providing space for over 5000 girls and boys within the age groups of 8 to 15 years to participate.



The process of formation and the strengthening of *Bal Panchayat* has enhanced the skills of its members as active citizens. The children have demonstrated their capacities to make decisions that are democratic and engaging, as well as being able to independently execute many beneficial actions in each village. In the last four years, Bal Panchayats have successfully enabled children to create an ongoing dialogue both among themselves and with adults, including the village governance bodies.

The documentation captures the essence and scope of *Bal Panchayat*, detailing the step-by-step implementation and expansion of the project. It highlights the challenges faced and the strategies followed to overcome them. The restrictions and opportunities in child participation at the village level are captured. Above all, the documentation attempts to motivate replication and expansion of similar child participation models around the world. An external review is under completion to supplement and evaluate the progress.

About Save the Children

Save the Children fights for children's rights. Our vision is a world in which all children's rights are fulfilled - a world which respects and values each child, a world where all children participate and have influence, a world where all children have hope and opportunity. Save the Children works to achieve and realise the objectives and mission of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Save the Children Sweden's work in South and Central Asia is based on a long term regional strategy. The organisation harnesses strategic and quality partnerships with children, NGOs, government, UN, academia, human rights organisations, civil society organisations, private sector and media at national and international levels, in order to strengthen accountability and responsibility among key duty bearers in reducing child rights violations. (For more details visit www.rb.se/eng/)

Save the Children Canada is one of the oldest agencies working in the field of child rights, child development, child participation and the protection of children. Since 1921, it has been providing need-based, innovative support and assistance to children all over the world. The Save the children Canada works in Asia region in the areas of emergencies, education, health and child rights issues in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and other south Asian nations. (For more details visit www.savethechildren.ca)

Both the organisations are active members of the International Save the Children Alliance.

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