

WORKSHOP ON YOUTH AND SAFETY

Organised by JAGORI, New Delhi

September 14, 2009, India Islamic Centre, New Delhi

Introduction

A one day workshop on *youth and safety* was organized by JAGORI with support from UN Habitat on 14th September, 2009. Around 11 NGO's participated in the workshop.

Participating organizations

HAQ: Centre for Child Rights works towards the recognition, promotion and protection of rights of all children. It aims to look at the child in an integrated manner within the framework of the Constitution of India, and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which India ratified in 1992, and contribute to the building of an environment where every child's rights are recognised and promoted without discrimination. HAQ believe that child rights and children's concerns have to be mainstreamed into all developmental planning and action, and must also become a core developmental indicator.

Action India: Action India endeavours to support adolescent girls in forums that encourage leadership, emphasize self-help models of learning, and promote skills that will catalyze long term sustainable action from the grassroots level. Its programmes enable adolescent girls to gain awareness of their rights through body knowledge, legal literacy workshops, and life skills training. With an emphasis on developing leadership skills, the forums open a space for girls on the brink of womanhood to articulate their hopes and fears, assert their own identity, and claim their individual space - to step out into the world with confidence.

Nirantar: Nirantar works towards empowering women through education – by enabling access to information, promoting literacy and engendering education processes. It achieves this through direct field interventions, creating educational resources, research and advocacy, and training. Actively involved with the women's movement and other democratic rights movements, Nirantar brings concerns central to these movements into its educational work. Nirantar was set up in 1993, has offices in New Delhi, and in three districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The Action for Self Reliance and Alternatives (ASRA): is a registered trust, registered under Trusts Act 1992, with registration number 3850. It came into existence on 12th August 1992, when a group of likeminded people came together with a common objective of serving the marginalized segments of society with a special focus on persons with disabilities living in the slums, resettlement colonies, tribal and rural areas. It is a group of researchers, social activists, lawyers, academicians, social workers, doctors, planners and rehabilitation professionals.

National Conference of Dalit Organisations (NACDOR): was formed in December 2001 in New Delhi. NACDOR is presently comprised of more than 300 organisations from

Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand states of Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry. It has a nationwide network of committed volunteers working selflessly for the empowerment of the Dalits. The NACDOR work for ensuring the educational, social, economic, political and cultural equality of Dalits (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes) and marginalised group of citizens through democratic processes. It believes in equal dignity of all and considers dignity as non-negotiable.

Sahara: is a 28 year old organization whose mission is to empower people facing difficult situations due to substance use and HIV/AIDS. Sahara has implemented a range of strategies to empower people, strengthen communities, to encourage safer behaviours and to aid in the reintegration of people into society. Sahara has 36 projects most of which address substance use and HIV/AIDS. Sahara is run almost entirely by former substance users and PLHA. Sahara runs services for men, women, children and the transgender community.

Prayas: was founded in 1988 by Delhi police chief Amod Kanth after a fire ravaged the North Delhi slum of Jahangirpuri. "Prayas" is a Hindi word, derived from Sanskrit, meaning "endeavour". The organisation initially focussed on providing shelter and education to children affected by the disaster. Since then it has expanded into many other areas. It now provides alternative education, shelter homes, health and nutrition and other services to marginalised children across India. Disadvantaged women and teenagers also avail of services offered by Prayas, in particular vocational education. In response to crises, such as the 2001 Gujarat earthquake and the 2004 tsunami, Prayas has expanded its services outside of Delhi in recent years and now operates in seven states across India.

Vacha: is a term in the feminine gender in several Indian languages. It means speech, verbal expression or articulation. Established as a women's library and cultural center by a small group of women, Vacha has today evolved as a resource center for women and girls. It is part of various autonomous women's networks and groups. Its major focuses are women's rights and girlhood issues.

Pravah: registered in 1993, is a registered non-profit organization based in New Delhi, India. It works with adolescents, youth organizations and institutions working with young people to impact issues of social justice through youth citizenship action. Through its active citizenship and youth development interventions, it build with and in youth respect and understanding of citizenship, attitude of ownership for common spaces, skill of leadership for social change and behaviors to develop strong relationships as the foundation. After a decade of intensive work, it has expanded our portfolio to include teachers training, incubating new initiatives and facilitative work with other organizations working on youth development. Together with these partners Pravah currently advocating for youth development and citizenship action.

The Tehelka Foundation: believes in Youth. It has faith in the power of young people to bring about social change, by not accepting the corruption and rot prevalent in our society today, or the passive acceptance of our citizens who have allowed these systems to flourish. We believe in the dynamism of youthful energy to engage with community issues and demand accountability from governance that has to deliver now.

The Foundation sees Youth as Agents of Social Change. A not for profit Trust started four years ago its Vision is one of Social Equity and Justice. It has a range of programs that bring together young people from different socio-economic backgrounds onto a common platform, so that they can share and learn from each other. It uses tools of theatre, creative visualization and interactive discussions to break barriers of class and language with the groups. Given the opportunity and the adequate tools, our hope for a sustainable planet with inclusive growth for all, rests with our Youth.

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan is a national campaign to hold the government accountable to its promise to end Poverty, Social Exclusion & Discrimination. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan emerged from the consensus among human rights activists and social action groups who were part of the World Social Forum 2004 (Mumbai) on the need for a forceful, focused and concerted effort to make a difference to the fact that one-fourth of the world's poor live in India, and continue to experience intense deprivation from opportunities to learn, live and work in dignity. It aims to do this by monitoring the promises made by the government to meet the objectives set in the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), the National Development Goals and the National Common Minimum Program (2004-09) with a special focus on the Right to Liveihood, Health & Education. We work to ensure that the concerns and aspirations of Dalits, Adivasis, Nomadic Tribes, Women, Children, Youth and the Differently Abled are mainstreamed across programs, policies and development goals of the central and state governments.

Aims and objectives of the workshop

- To discuss and share the experiences of different organizations working on the issues relating to youth and safety.
- Discuss about the different methodologies used by different organizations and taking lessons from each other
- Building wider networks with each other and taking joint campaigns for more successful mobilizations on different issues

Introductory general presentation by JAGORI

Area of work: Madanpur Khadar

Methodologies involved: Safety Audit, monitoring tool, tree plantation, career-counselling in non conventional vocations.

- We realized that working with girls alone is not enough. Boys are also needed to be roped in. so we began our work with boys as well.
- Different sets of safety issues raised by boys and girls:

For girls the issues were – lack of proper public spaces for them, insecurity, violence etc. The question of discrimination in homes around different issues was also important for them. On the other hand – the issue of discrimination in homes or restriction on their mobility was not the issue for the boys. However, the presence of hooligans in the neighbourhood creates an environment of fear for them as well.

- The lack of civic amenities in the neighbourhood – hospitals, proper toilets, roads, public parks, proper roads etc was the common problem of all of them. These issues are also related to the question of safety and here one can see the convergence of gender and class. For instance, non availability of toilets forces women to go outside at night and added with the problem of proper lights makes the question of their security a very fragile one.
- Rampant practice of drug abuse in the neighbourhood. The involvement of huge vested interest creates problems for effective action on these issues.
- Complete apathy of police and other stakeholders about the condition of the people in the area. The element of class seems to work here.
- We organized tree plantation programmes to reclaim the existing public spaces in the area. We involved boys, girls as well as the local residents in these programmes.
- Safety in the schools: condition of the schools in the area is in a horrific condition with no light, fans, or even sitting arrangement. We trained our young activists about the different government channels where they can take the complaints about such issues.
- More than mere lectures or meetings, self learning processes or practical activities like play etc are more effective vehicles for training and sensitizing the youth. In the process, a group of around 30 youths developed a play which touched upon a whole range of minute as yet important issues viz. sexual harassment in the market, extraction of illegal levies by the police on small traders, how power is exercised there etc. The play was then performed in many places during our campaign.
- We focused on developing unconventional skills among the young girls. In collaboration with One World Foundation, they were taught to handle cameras, preparing radio programmes etc.
- Preparation of wall magazines by the youth: they help in creating consciousness about different issues in the locality and also provide spaces for creative minds. They are then pasted in different locations of the locality.
- At least once in a day, we take a walk in our areas and examine if garbage's have been dumped in the proper places, if gambling or other such sorts of activities are going on in public spaces etc. Due to our interventions, gambling and drug use have seen a sharp decline in the area for some time.
- Our youth team uses another method called monitoring tool. Here the young activists observe 2-4 things in a week and examine the times of their supplies. These facts are then used for further advocacy.

Discussion

- It was found that how even seemingly small issues like toilets are linked with the question of safety. The provision of fee at the toilets becomes a problem for the poor. A proposal was mooted that lets have a provision of family cards whereby each family irrespective of its members will have access to toilets at a fixed and affordable rate.
- It was also proposed that other methods like budget analysis, inviting different stakeholders –police, politicians etc can be done. The problem of sensitizing boys about the issues of masculinity etc was also discussed.

Presentation by HAQ

- HAQ works with children under 18 years of age.
- It has two components: Child Protection Unit (CPU) and Child and Governance (CG).
- CG includes budget analysis –the money spent on children – of both union as well as select state budgets- with *development, protection, education and health* as four indicators which are further used for advocacy.
- Parliamentary Board: documentation and recording of questions raised in parliament around child right issues. It also includes advocacy with parliamentarians – requesting them to ask questions in the parliament around crucial child right issues.
- Publication: three issues of *Status of India's Children* have been published so far; the most recent one is being in 2008.
- Providing Legal Aid: to children who are in need of security and also to children who are involved in crime. We work with them with on 'capacity building' to ensure their proper participation in judicial and other matters.
- Training and Capacity Building: with various stakeholders involved in child affairs viz. – police, judiciary, child homes, educational departments and work on *child rights, violence on children, child development* etc. The element of child participation and the rampant instrumentalist use of children for various purposes are specially focused on.
- Child Participation (CP): three elements of CP; CP as a tool, as a concept and as a right. We work with different NGO's and governmental institutions to build awareness about it.
- Child Safety and Violence on Children: often certain forms of violence on children in schools or homes are regarded as legitimate. We are trying to develop critical understanding about it among different stakeholders and exploring new possibilities around it.

Discussion

- A respondent raised the perplexing question of child labour and during the discussions it was found that the aspect of '*the child as the sole bread earner*' is often exaggerated. Child labour cannot be always seen in economic terms – which

may often vary from father's drunkenness to agrarian distress. There are also other reasons at work. The problem is - there is a lack sufficient institutional structure to accommodate even those children who are often 'rescued' by different concerned parties. The apathy of police, judiciary and other stakeholders are important factors making the question a real complex one. So it was felt that a multi-pronged strategy is needed to address the question more efficiently which could address all these aspects.

- it was felt that the mere use of the term 'children' from a 2-year to a 18 year old indiscriminately can sometimes camouflage the other identities and thus the other aspects of the oppression and exploitation of the concerned group(for instance an 18 year old girl is not just a children; she is also a women). So a more careful use of categories would be appreciable.

Presentation by Action India

- Have been working with adolescent girls since 1990 after a realization from experience that merely working with adult women is enough.
- It all started from a summer camp in 1990 where discussions were facilitated on issues generally not touched by school curriculum or home learning viz. sexual harassment, gender discrimination, patriarchy etc.
- Organising debate between two generations of women: a special debate between mothers and daughters was organized to enhance the understanding between the two. It was realized how often patriarchy is made to work through the medium of women itself and thus it seems as if women themselves are their own enemies while in reality it is the male domination which is at the heart of it.
- Capacity building among adolescent women: apart from art and craft, patchwork etc career counseling, law classes, health education etc have also been provided to these young women.
- Celebration of 23rd December as adolescent girls' day: as a result of continued work with the adolescent girls this proposal for celebrating a day as their own came from themselves. It demonstrates the development of critical thinking among them. Since early 1990's this day is celebrated every year.
- Work with adolescent boys: library programme, classes, sports meet etc. were organized as a part of the work with adolescent boys. Working with boys has helped in the development of a new generation of men and women to understand each other as well as the regressive structure of patriarchy.
- Leadership Training: Special training was provided to select boys and girls who had clear potential to emerge as community leaders. This helps in bringing in more boys and girls from the neighbourhood. Special programmes on drug abuse and narcotics were also arranged.
- Water and sanitation programme, newsletter: the activist boys and girls prepare a newsletter every week where the problems relating to water supply and garbage management in the area is highlighted. The newsletter is pasted in different parts of the area. The other stakeholders of the area – the local MLA, municipal councilor, residents, and government officials have also sought to be roped in the process.

Presentation by Nirantar

- Education as empowerment: Nirantar works on the issues of gender and education within the broad framework of empowerment and information.
- The work with the youth began two years back when lots of hues and cries were made about the introduction of sex education in schools. We studied the materials prepared by NACO-paradoxically an organization working on HIV-AIDS issues and not on education – and found they were rather informed by a fear driven approach. From then onwards, we began our advocacy with NCERT.
- Have been working in 70 villages in Bundelkhand for last seven years on *adult women literacy* with at least one educational centre in each village. \
- Last year a residential school was established along the lines of these educational centres with participation of 50-60 married as well as non married tribal and dalit women within the age group of 14-30, for eight months.
- Development of an alternative curriculum: an alternative curriculum was prepared which included mathematics, language, *jal-jungle-zameen*, market, society and bodies with special attention to the local contexts and placed within an inter-disciplinary approach.
- Breaking the taboos: intense discussions happened around issues of sexualities, stereotypes, pleasure, marriage, sexual harassment, taboos around ‘bad women-good women’, desire, modes of dressing and dress codes, shame etc.
- Deciphering interlinkages: discussions on the mutually reinforcing regressive structures caste, gender and class happened with simple examples taken from the local contexts.
- Letter writing program: participants were encouraged to write letters to teachers discussing their different issues often understood as intimate and taboos to come over hesitation
- Witnessing the change: by the end of the programme, the participants became more comfortable with their bodies, reflected in marked shift in their dressing ways, their conversations and their thinking patterns.
- Looking ahead: a new batch has been enrolled this year and Nirantar is looking for more creative ways to impart education among people on gender, sexuality and all such taboos.

Discussions

- It was found that the general stereotype about village communities being necessarily hostile to discussions around sexualities was wrong as demonstrated by Nirantar's educational programme in Bundelkhand which didn't get even a single hostile response. So the real issue is about the proper approach to education rather the inherent hostility of the rural people.

Combined discussion on presentations by JAGORI, Haq, Nirantar and Action India:

The lessons

- It was felt that the works of Action India (Choti Sabla), Nirantar, Haq and JAGORI have been on similar grounds and can of help to each other. All of them work on different aspects of the same social totality.
- Use of quantitative indicators is necessary but not sufficient. Some qualitative indicators are necessary in order to grasp the real changes we have been able to make.
- One can have an audit on the 'dreams and desperations' (*sapna and nirasha*) of the youths. What are their dreams, desperations, expectations from the society? How can they be properly understood? We need to do something along these lines.
- As many of us have been working on the issue of safety we can now think about giving it some institutionalized form. Can we have, for instance, something like *suraksha mitro ki toli* where both boys and girls can be involved? We should think something along these lines.

Presentation by ASRA

- ASRA was formed in 1992.
- Have been working on the issues of disability and education
- Present work is mainly around 24 colonies of west Delhi.
- Our own work premised on the Personal Disability Act of 1985 which advocates for the making of a 'barrier free environment'.
- Bringing out girls to outside has also been a problem for us.
- For some time, ASRA has also been working on family planning. But rather than lack of awareness, it is the issue of power relations within families which ultimately decides the fate of it.
- Girls with disability are more vulnerable than the boys. Proving with things like tricycles often doesn't help them due to family's apathy and hesitation about their mobility.

Discussions on ASRA's presentation

- People feel uncomfortable to relate the idea of sexuality with disabled persons. This creates much mental pressure and harms them. Recently some organisations have emerged who solely work on building networks among disabled person so that they can share their feelings and make friends. Working and building networks with such organizations will be beneficial.

Presentation by Sahara

- Sahara was formed in 1978 and has been working on the issue of drug abuse in different sections of the society.
- Work among street children as well; as this section of the people are often neglected by the agencies working on the issues of drug abuse.
- Method: use of oral substitution, counseling and then rehabilitation
- Sahara also provides career counseling as part of the rehabilitation program.

Discussion

- It is very difficult to work on the issues of drug abuse as huge vested interests are involved in them. JAGORI and Action India also have programmes on drug abuse in their work. So all different organizations need to come together to address the issue more effectively
- As many drug addicts are also women so gender counseling can also be a part of the overall counseling program.

Presentation by NACDOR

- Nacdor is a national platform of more than 250 organisations formed in 2001
- Guiding principle: we believe that the dalits are the real backbones of the society
- Sarva siksha abhiyan - have been working in UP, Rajasthan and Haryana and ensures participation of dalit students in these programmes. In Haryana alone, we admitted more than 1, 40,000 students in schools; fighting against the discriminatory behaviour of the teachers and other authorities along caste lines.
- Since 2007, have been working in Madanpur Khadar. Started a school for a while but due to harassment from police and vested interests it closed down. We are planning to revive it again.
- Planning to work in dalit colonies around issues of basic amenities (water, electricity etc) using different methods – ballads, songs, plays etc.
- In 2007 a world wide “stand-up” programme was organised under the aegis of United Nations. We also organised around 200 people in the area and one can see a certain growth of consciousness in them.
- Letter writing program: at least one letter from each colony is sent to the political representatives asking them to address the basic problems of the colonies. It helps in the growth of consciousness among people as well as act as a pressure element on the political representatives

Presentation by Prayas

- We basically work with the children who are under unusual and difficult situations viz. children in insurgency affected areas (Assam), in places affected by natural calamities, like earthquakes(Gujarat), cyclones (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) etc . Our work also includes juvenile justice, child labour, orphan children, children under distress etc. We work on their care and protection,

evacuation, rehabilitation, in some cases rescue and finally relocation. We have many shelter homes for these children. When they become fit for returning to their homes, of course under the condition that they will be fully secure and protected there, we follow the instructions of JJB (Juvenile Justice Board) and CWC (Child Welfare Committee) – the two statutory bodies of government of India on this regard. Till when these children live with us, we have a programme of alternative education called Deputation Resource and Training Centre (DRTC). We have around 227 alternative educational centres under it.

Presentation by Vacha

- Have been working in ten bastis in Mumbai – in six only with girls and in four with both boys and girls
- Initially sought to work with teachers as well as parents – but they tended to be very conservative
- the class difference between teachers and students results in a complete apathy of the former towards the later
- We organize plays, film screenings, singing and other programmes on a regular basis and also do service delivery and advocacy. However its difficult to separate them as they have become quite mixed in our work
- We work on women's empowerment and teach them different skills but tend to avoid those skills traditionally identified with patriarchal norms.
- The lanes in Mumbai are very narrow in comparison to other cities which makes the issue of safety a different and more difficult one
- The public spaces of Mumbai have seen an intense process of privatization – parks have been turned into joggers park – slums are demolished in the name of development – all these makes the condition of the poor and the marginalized section very vulnerable. The public spaces for girls from poor families have shrunk – making the question of their mobility a very complicated one. How we can fight against these forces remains an open one.

Presentation by Pravah

- Formed in 1992 after the demolition of Babri Masjid which saw an increasingly apathy and powerlessness among people.
- Pravah believes in *Active citizenship and intervention*. Even small initiatives can bring change
- We believe that experiential learning is more effective than conventional learning
- Work among the youth – in college campuses etc.
- Organize and give scholarships, internships, exposure trips etc.

Presentation from Tehelka Foundation

- Have been working with the youth for last four years
- Organize workshops, exposure trips, tree plantation programmes, reclamation of open spaces etc for the youth
- Children are regarded as equals in all these programmes and encouraged to take initiatives
- Interaction of children from different background is encouraged so that they can know and understand each other.
- Learning experiences: many children's of Delhi have never been to villages. So trips are organized so that they can learn about things lying outside their world. Living beyond the parental surveillance for some days also helps them to understand themselves better.
- Children love people with humour and those who regard them as equals and friends. They ask lot of questions and it's important to answer them patiently. They love appreciation.
- There is still a long way to go as different factors makes obstacles in the normal development of the children. It's important to remember that each child has her unique capacities.

Presentation by Wada Na Todo Ahiyan (WNTA)

- WNTA is a coalition of more than 3000 different grassroot organizations formed in 2004.
- Work on different issues : land rights, forest rights, NREGA, urban planning, environmental degradation, child rights etc
- Have been involved in programmes like Mission against Social Exclusion and Poverty and was instrumental in collecting the signature of around 3 lakh children in 2004 while preparing a reminder to UPA government about the promises it had made during the election time
- The experience of WNTA shows how even with a small secretariat, large mobilizations can be done through horizontal network building.

Extended Discussion on all presentations

The challenges:

- The element of accountability – to the self, society and the stakeholders can be seen in all the presentations. This is a very important aspect. It needs to be practiced constantly.
- All the organizations are working under the notion of right – as citizens, children's, dalits, women etc. We work against the discriminations exercised based on these different identities. However, it's important to understand how

- these different discriminations are interlined with each other and thus chart a proper way to address the complex interaction among them.
- The question of the role of the government has remained a vexed one. Though we will continue to work and implement policies at the ground level, but what about the responsibilities of the government? How more pressure could be put on the government? This question has remained an open one and more deliberations are needed on it.
 - How can we make all our work gender sensitive? Or for that matter sensitive about other identities (dalit, transgender, class etc) and develop consciousness at the same time?
 - We all have been working on similar fields. How can we help each other in more effective ways and thus carry forward the struggle to new levels?

Vision for the future

- During the discussions it was found that already on numerous occasions different organizations can together under some campaign or other. Such campaigns need to be increased. JAGORI is already involved in a campaign for safe Delhi. November 25th to December 10th is the ideal time for campaigns around issues of violence on women and other issues. The International Disability Day, Human Rights Day, AIDS day - all of them comes within these 15 days. So numerous campaigns interlinking these different issues can be developed around this time.
- These different organizations can have a regular learning forum hoisted by each organization once in a month or two. It will help in the sharing of experiences of each other and building more effective work.
- During their work many women organizations face cases of violence on children which needs separate attention. In such cases Haq can offer its services for them. Similarly, in cases relating to girl child help from JAGORI will be beneficial for HAQ. They can help in the capacity building and training of each others activists. Haq has some expertise in law which they can share with others. PRAVAH provides activists for different other organisations. Many youths do internship under it and then they are re-directed other organisations. This way, the organisations get some volunteers and these youths also get some exposure and at the same time. One World South Asia has a number of young activists trained in different skills viz. making films, performing plays and songs, using digital cameras. Other organizations can provide platforms for these artists to perform their arts. JAGORI has a huge archive of materials on gender training. Other organizations can take help from it.