

Editorial

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India is one of the youngest nations of the world with nearly 430 million children out of its one billion population. Going by the various statistical figures, a large chunk of this population are compelled to lead a barren life without much hope, in situation of neglect and apathy often falling prey to social vices, like drug abuse, sexual exploitation etc sometimes manifesting into criminal activities. This remains a dark reality amidst proclaimed prosperity that we have not been able to delineate with even after 59 years of independence. So much so that India is now being described in the international circles as the most dangerous place for children.

These situations together falsify the tall claims of our economists about India being on the threshold of great economic boom. How can this growth have a purpose and meaning if it does not benefit the young future of the nations, in spite of the protective provisions including the ambitious National Plan of Action, 2005, the issue of child protection stands high on concern and where only 215 million have access to right to education?

We, as a national level voluntary organization and activists, have been working closely with the government and other national and international bodies as partners in the issue of child protection. We believe that an improvement in the quality of life of these marginalized children can bring back smiles on the faces of these children and their families. Prayas has been actively engaged in many child protection programmes like giving shelter, alternative education, and nutrition etc. to the children. The past few months have been a span full of eventful memories. While we have been implementing intervention programmes on alternative education and took up a host of events with social messages attached for the larger population on issues of child protection and child abuse, at the same time, we got the privileged opportunity of participating in the highest policy making exercise of the planning commission on child protection for the forthcoming Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-2012 as part of the Steering Committee on Social Welfare and the Working Group on Development of children and empowerment.

We strongly believe that unless we are able to bring a positive change in the lives of this population, especially the children, our dreams of achieving the desired status in socio- economic and political landscape would remain a distant dream. Enjoy reading. Do share your feedback. Best wishes.

Prayas Team

Access In the Future Tense: Prayas' Endeavour for Information Access

Informed education leads to empowerment, especially in the Indian perspective where mindless economic migration in the urban slums has created thousands of children, unattended, illiterate and vulnerable to all the urban malaise.



Expressing dreams through painting

Prayas had been one of the pioneer institution which intervene, got engaged at the slums to foster education, kindle the candle of hope and aspiration for the urban 'have-nots', the children who are gullible to endless exploitation. The mantle on the shoulder of Prayas has become stronger over the years, along with more than 110 alternative education centers all over Delhi, Prayas runs twenty one children's library laden with not only books but effective librarians whose only endeavour is to develop a sense of wonder among the children, to develop lifelong learning habits to challenge the milieu they are growing up in.

This tryst to change the destiny of these marginalized children is supported by Room to Read, a partner organization with equal enthusiasm to become change agent. Who are the readers? Victims of child trafficking, children of our own shelter homes, street children who drop in at our drop in centers, young adults who aspire critical literacy, regular school goers who have a zeal to perform better.

The year 2006 was a factful year for the children, along with participating in theatre workshops, demonstrating in International Book Fair, their creative spark, children have gone ahead in publishing their creative talent in the form of books for children written by themselves.

Future -speak? Information literacy will dominate, initiatives to engage web as a tool for better learning and consolidating achievements for future clustered knowledge resource centers would be an act priory.

Future-speak: IJJ Resource Centre

Information Access for the stakeholders to understand and advocate for a better tomorrow is the most important issue for Prayas family. The idea of Institute of Juvenile Justice, which has taken the form of multitasking National Resource Centre for Juvenile Justice, with two and half decades of in the field exposure, we have blossomed into a vigorous Research and Documentation Centre which has made pioneering impact on the Governmental policy making as well as sensitizing other new entrants in the third sector(training & development publication).

We have ventured to build the uncharted terrain of developing the 'first -of- its- kind' resource on child rights with a view to cater to the informational need of all the stake holders both nationally and internationally.

With eyes on the sky, we aspire for an ambitious Juvenile Justice Information Network in the future. It is evident that Prayas will leave no stone unturned to achieve a better tomorrow for all the children who are deprived of a life they deserve to live.



Prayas Inter-Library Competition

Karishma, a shelter home girl wishes to become a radio jockey, or a movie actress or something different and big, so that she comes back to the children and better their lives. Clearly it's a clarion call for us to give her a future.

Any takers?



Need for a multi pronged approach to curb the menace of child abuse

Rani (name changed) was kidnapped, sold, re-sold, raped and finally forced into flesh-trade. Rani is not the only one to have been subjected to abuse and exploitation; there are many more

who are exposed to multiple forms of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Child abuse is the most shocking and the most common thing happening around us. The abusers inflict deep scars that are long lasting. Overall, the reported rate of child abuse has increased more than 300% since 1976. The most recent estimate by UN reported, that out of 115 million missing children, most of them were vulnerable girls. Statistics alone cannot convey the horror of physical assaults upon children in our society. There is in fact a conflict to speak out loudly or to keep silent. The decision is not easy because to remember the traumatic past and proclaiming it aloud is not an easy task. It is difficult on the part of the victim and that too when she/he is a child to explore her tragic past but we, as an adults can think and fight against this problem.

The fight is to sit numb and be a part of the audience or to speak out the truth so as to draw the attention of the society towards the issue of child abuse. But the fact is child abuse or any abuse will continue as long as we do not talk about it and don't work in the direction to uproot the problem from its very source.

The term 'child abuse' may have different connotations in different socio-economic situations. A universal definition of child abuse, fitting into all context and situations presently does not exist.

Apart from the various laws mainly concerning children, there are a host of related social legislations and criminal laws, which have some beneficial provisions for the care, protection and rehabilitation of children. The laws related to commerce, industry and trade have some provisions for children, but they hardly provide any protection or cater to their developmental needs.

National Study on Child Abuse

Prayas in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, UNICEF and Save the Children, is conducting a National Study on Child Abuse in India. Child abuse is a fairly common phenomenon cutting across socio-economic and cultural barriers. This is the first study of its kind being conducted in the country and would develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of child abuse, with a view to formulating appropriate policies and programmes in order to effectively curb and control the problem of child abuse in India.

We would also like to mention here that this study is the biggest ever study on Child Abuse done anywhere in the World (having a sample size of 16,800), the next biggest being the Beijing Study with a sample size of about 4000. The Study involves a team of Experts not only from India but also from UNICEF office at New York. Thus, it is bound to have a global impact.



The study has identified five different forms of abuse namely, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and substance abuse. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To assess the magnitude and forms of child abuse in India.
2. To study the profile of the abused children and the social and economic circumstances leading to their abuse.
3. To critically analyse the existing legal framework to deal with the problem of child abuse in the country.
4. Recommend strategies and measures for further streamlining child development policies and programmes.

For administrative purposes, the country would be divided into six zones, based on its standardized classification, with two States selected from each zone. The selected States are

1. North: Delhi & Rajasthan
2. South: Kerala & Andhra Pradesh
3. East: West Bengal & Bihar
4. West: Goa/Maharashtra & Gujarat
5. Central: Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh
6. North East: Mizoram & Assam

A child has been defined as a person not exceeding 18 years of age. The following categories of respondents will be selected for the study:

- (a) Street children
- (b) Working children
- (c) Children in schools
- (d) Children in institutional care
- (e) Children in family groups not attending school
- (f) Young Adults (18-21 yrs)
- (g) Stakeholders

Present Status of the Study

All three sets of frequency tables have been generated. The first draft of the report is expected to be completed by mid November which would then be shared with the funding agencies. After receiving the comments from them the findings of the study would be disseminated in a national workshop after which the final report would be prepared.

UNIFEM PRAYAS MEDIA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2005

Lately, there has been an alarming increase in the incident of trafficking children and women in the Indian sub-continent including Nepal and Bangladesh. Children have been the worst victims of this problem who get trafficked for purposes of flesh trade, child labour and trading of organs to just name a few. Some of the obvious reasons reinforcing to this problem comprise poverty, lack of sensitization & awareness, illiteracy, ignorance, increased operation of criminal elements and inadequate attention by the authorities. The problem further assumes significance due to the fact that the rehabilitation of such victims becomes a serious problem as the community often unwittingly refuses to accept the victims. As an organization working for nearly two decades now on issues of child rights, Prayas has noted with concern how young children are literally sold and battered into performing acts that can only be labeled as the most shameful acts for any civilized society. Deeply concerned with this problem, Prayas has been working in collaboration with the Government, NGOs, Police, Lawyers and Social Workers and international bodies, like UNICEF and UNIFEM. It has also been organizing national and international consultations on the issue of combating human trafficking. One of the major recommendations emerging out of these consultations was the need for active involvement of the media. The objective was to create awareness about this problem among the most marginalized and vulnerable population and to take the message of vulnerability, hazards and consequences of trafficking especially regard to the children in every nook and corner of the country.

To ensure increased coverage and reporting on human trafficking by generating interest of the media in this glaring issue an incentive to media persons covering on this issue was planned as a token of acknowledgement. In this venture



Prayas Media Achievement Award

UNIFEM agreed to join hands with Prayas. As a result, the first ever media achievement awards covering human trafficking and related issues were announced at a joint consultation of Prayas, NGO and the media in 2005. These awards, one each for the electronic media and the print media carry a cash prize of Rs. 60,000 and a Citation. Nominations were invited for this award from young journalist between the ages of 25-35 years and the entries were duly screened by a panel of eminent judges. The first award for the year 2005 for the electronic media went to Mr. Syedain Zaidi of India TV for his story on 'Damu Ki Dastan'.

Likewise the second award went to Mr. Pankaj Kumar Yadav of Rashtriya Sahara (Hindi Dainik) for his consistent coverage of this issue.



Konkona Sen with Prayas children on the occasion of Media Achievement Award

It is expected that these awards will continue to be given in the time to come. They will also motivate budding journalists to enhance their efforts to highlight human trafficking issues in order to generate greater awareness among all the stakeholders. Considering the importance of the

topic and its emotional social and economic implications, it is felt that these awards will act as a trendsetter for journalists in the time to come.

Laura's Laurels to Prayas

The visit of the Ms. Laura Bush, US First Lady, came as a major recognition to the efforts of Prayas in issues of child protection especially in combating human trafficking. The campus buzzed with activities as Ms. Laura Bush accompanied by Ms. Jeannie Mulford, wife of the American Ambassador along with a group of



Laura Bush at Prayas Alternative Education center

senior officials from the US Embassy visited Prayas Institute of Juvenile Justice in New Delhi on Thursday, 2nd March 2006. The First Lady was greeted and welcomed by children, Mr. Amod K Kanth, founder Secretary of Prayas and Mr. Rajib K Haldar, the Executive Director of the Institute.

The First Lady was briefed about the various contemporary market driven vocational education courses run by the Prayas Institute of Economic Empowerment and Prayas Jan Shikshan Sansthan. Mrs. Bush visited one alternative education center out of the 200 alternative education centers presently being run by Prayas throughout Delhi, catering to more than 10,000 children in Delhi alone. The most eventful moment was the round table interaction with a group of shelter home children. The group was introduced by Mr. Kanth who set a perspective of child protection and the challenges that India's marginalized children are facing today. Children shared their experiences of life, the positive intervention of quality care and education being facilitated by Prayas, their aspiration of becoming women of substance and their wish to give back to their marginalized groups.

Ms. Bush listened to the voices of those children for whom the institution had been recognized as an international best practice. She commented that Prayas

was a model institution and indeed her country should encourage developing such institutions. She appreciated the courage and commitments of those children participating in the round table for their fight against all odds in life and demonstration of success. She wished all of them achieved their aspirations and invited them to write letters to her, which she committed to respond personally. Mr. Kanth summarized the round table discussion with a note, 'Prayas represents the voluntary sector and the marginalized children, youth and women. The group of children participating in the round table is a symbolic representation of voices of millions for whom Prayas seeks partnership with like-minded governments and institutions. This partnership gets acknowledged here by the good gesture of the First Lady and we thank the US Government for encouragement and support to our work and the mission'.

She visited one of the successful business outlets in the campus, manned and managed by survivors of trafficking for their economic rehabilitation. She was



Prayas children in a round table conference with Laura Bush

informed that about hundreds of such victims have been economically rehabilitated through seven such outlets in Delhi and outside. She was very impressed with the Prayas partnership of voluntary sector with the corporates, the government and the strategy for economic empowerment and rehabilitation.

The event unfolded with a cultural programme performed by the children of Prayas in her honour. The children of Anupam Prayas performed Rajasthani folk dance. The visit of Lady Bush to India has shown a way to foster cooperation development between India and America.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Saksham Empowering the Girl child through Education.

The onslaught of forces, released by the compulsions of a techno industrial - urban model has made India stand on the crossroad of a dilemma. Specifically, this dilemma comprises an ongoing conflict between the traditional role model of the girl child and the increasing acceptance of democratic values, which emphasize equality, especially, gender equality.

Despite the fundamental Right to Equality, considerable disparities can still be seen in the provision of nutrition, health care, education, training etc to boys and girls. At an age where they can barely take care of themselves, young girls especially in rural areas and urban slums are often burdened with the responsibility of baby sitting and assisting their mothers with the domestic chores. If a family has to choose between educating a son or a daughter, because of financial restrictions, it is typically the son who is more likely to be chosen.

Discrimination against the girl child has serious repercussions, as it does not affect her alone but also the future progeny. The negative influence of such discrimination is not only reflected in her personality alone as she grows into a woman but also in the manner in which she brings up her children. All this is besides the fact that such biased upbringing negatively affects her family as well as society as a whole by lowering the status of women in general.



Children at Madanpur Khadar centre, Delhi

Prayas has launched a new initiative in Madanpur Khadar in South Delhi, a recently resettled colony, where the dwellers are residing with bare minimum amenities. The project Saksham aims to provide the female children with all that they are missing viz. education, health care, nutrition, psycho-social support etc.

RECENT INITIATIVES UNDER THE PRAYAS REACH INDIA PROJECT

Inter NGO visit A platform fostering lateral learning

Prayas Reach India Project is project for building capacities of grassroot NGOs of Delhi in Project Management and Educational Service Delivery. The project aims to provide Educational Services and mainstream 4,500 at risk and vulnerable children into formal schools through sub-grantees in a time span of 3 years. Under this project two sub-grantee organizations, ABHAS and Sakshi, were identified on the basis of their project functioning and an exposure visit for the other sub-grantees was organized to these two organizations. The prime objective behind the



Meeting of Resource Group under Reach India Project



Orientation of headmasters under Reach India Project

visit was to ensure sharing of good practices among the sub-grantees and provide an opportunity for internal evaluation of the functioning of their own projects. The visit provided a platform to the teachers to interact with their counterparts in other organizations and share their experiences in the project. It has been observed during the visits conducted

(after the inter NGO visit), that there has been considerable improvement in the functioning of the learning centers.

For the long-term sustainability of any project it is essential that its evaluation is done from time to time to identify the problems and potential threats and to find possible solutions to overcome them. With this very objective a Resource Group has been formulated under the Prayas REACH India Project which comprises of the Prayas education team, Programme Managers of the sub-grantee NGO's, a representative of teachers from the sub-grantee NGO's and senior academicians. This resource group discusses the problem arising in the project and designs strategies for sorting out the problems. Besides these the group works on issues related to pedagogy, curriculum, and identification of areas for capacity building and also provides a forum for sharing of good practices.

Delhi's Theatre Diva's date with Prayas children

As part of its awareness campaign on the issue of child abuse, Prayas organized a Mahesh Dattani's well-acclaimed play "Thirty Days in September", a silent scream... directed by Lillete Dubey on 7th April, 2006 at FICCI Auditorium. Along with the Lillete Dubey, Neha Dubey, Joy Sengupta and Amar Talwar also performed in the play. The play highlighted an intense and gripping tale of love and betrayal that explores the brutal severance of the unbreakable bond between adult and child. A mother discovers the truth about her daughter, which sets them both on a journey of self discovery about their lives and their inextricably linked past.



A scene from the play Thirty Days in September - A Silent Scream...

The play revolved around a young girl's repeated sexual abuse by her uncle and the brittle relationship that results between a mother in denial and her betrayed daughter. It also focused on how the trauma of childhood abuse dominates her adult relationships in future, as she drifts from one affair to another, first seeking attention and then hating it.

Before staging this play, Ms. Lillete Dubey visited Prayas on 6th April, 2006 to interact with the children of the Tughlakabad, Girls Shelter Home.

Bal Mela: A Vibrant Advocacy Platform for Children

Prayas organized a Bal Mela with the joint efforts of SSA, Delhi and UEE Mission at Prayas Headquarters. The main objective behind organizing this mela was to



Children performing in Bal Mela

provide an opportunity to the marginalized children to express their hidden talents as part of their personality development.



Children performing in Bal Mela

Around 1600 children participated in this weeklong activity in which several painting and drama competitions on issues of social relevance and importance of education. Group dance, games, joyrides, puppet and magic shows formed part of other attractions in this mela. Arrangements were also made for

health check up, mid-day meals, etc. for the children.

PROJECT MUSKAN

Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre (JAC) Society and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2006 for implementing "Project Muskan" a sponsorship programme supporting 100 under privileged children in terms of shelter, medical facilities, education and vocational training.

The objective of this project is to transform the lives of 100 street/ neglected/ underprivileged children in becoming "Men and Women of substance" in a span of 10 years by assisting in making economically independent and responsible citizens through provision of basic services of education, meals, clothing, health care, shelter, sports, extra curricular activities and vocational training. This project would save at least 100 children from trauma and will ensure smile on their faces by transforming them into individuals enjoying dignity and self-respect in their lives.

The target group for this project includes boys and girls in the age group of 06-18 years. These children have been identified and placed at Prayas Childrens' Home Jahangirpuri and Shelter Home for Girls at Tughlakabad. These children have been picked- up and referred to Prayas from various sources

Child Assistance Centre at New Delhi Railway Station

- Child Welfare Committee
- Delhi Police
- Local NGO's
- Volunteers of Prayas

The facilities being given to these 100 children under this Project are as under:

- Provision of accommodation in Prayas owned Shelter Homes
- Education in Prayas Alternative Education Centres
- Nutrition thought 4 meals a day which is necessary for good health
- Clothing which includes uniforms, casual wear, woolens etc.
- Health care through regular health check-ups and medication

The project is unique in itself because Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited has agreed to support to this project for 10 years for substantial improvement in quality of life of the identified 100 children. The project would be renewed on yearly basis subject to performance of the project.

Making Web a Tool for Social Change



Prayas center in Chharanagar, Ahmedabad

To use computers as a learning aid and to familiarize and generate the interest of children in computer learnings "Sneh Prayas" a project of Prayas based in Ahmedabad introduced a novel concept of 'Hole-in-the-Wall' at its centre in Chharanagar jointly with NIIT Ltd. The HIWEL learning station is connected to NIIT headquarters (New Delhi) through Remote Monitoring System (RMS) with the help of web-cameras and internet. HIWEL-NIIT research team is constantly monitors and profiles the children of Chharanagar by analyzing their interests, insight and aspirations. A new computer centre was also inaugurated in Chharanagar in association with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

Prayas support to Bihar Voluntary Coordination Agency (BVCA)

Bihar Voluntary Coordination Agency (BVCA) is a voluntary agency working in the field of child adoption in Bihar. Prayas has been supporting the activities of BVCA by playing an active role in helping the agency in managing and promoting the on going and planned projects in Bihar. The main objective of joining hands with BVCA was to stop trafficking of infants in the hospitals. It has been reported that staffs of several hospitals & nursing homes are involved in trafficking and selling of newborn babies especially those of unwed mothers privately to childless couples eager for adoption. The effort under this project is to sensitize the doctors and advocate the promotion of legal procedure for adoption.

Visits at various centers

Bihar Chief Minister, Mr. Nitish Kumar visited the Samastipur center in Bihar. About 250 children of village Shambhoopatti and Karpoorigram enrolled in the different education center of Prayas in Samastipur under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan participated in a programme held during the visit.

- Senior level officers from Indian Oil Cooperation visited the home and interacted with children on 11 Jan, 06
- Prof. David Macdougall from Canberra University New Delhi conducted two months video work under which he trained the boys in camera handling, movie making, movie editing and in the making of short documentaries.
- Ms. Lillete Dubey and Mr. Amar Talwar visited Prayas center at Tughlakabad and also interacted with the media that was present at the occasion.
- General Manager & Assistant Manager, SIDBI visited Jahangirpuri project area. The officials interacted with the SHGs members.

Workshops & Seminars

- Capacity building workshop for SHGs members was conducted at Bawana J.J.Colony under NIUA



- Training module for capacity building developed for the workshop organized for CASP PLAN
- Module for community awareness was prepared and awareness camp held in the communities with the purpose of prevention of sexual abuse cases in the community. The aim was to sensitize people about the issue and the effective procedure for handling the cases
- Introspective workshop on Crisis Intervention was held. It was well attended by Police personnel, lawyers, academicians, NGO's representatives and doctors.
- Childline Coordinator attended one-day state level consultation on Juvenile Justice Act at Delhi Secretariat organized by Prayas & Dept. of Social Welfare, Govt. of Delhi.

Recognitions

- SARIQ of USAID recognized Crisis Intervention Center as a Good Practice in dealing with sexual, emotional, physical and social abuse cases.
- Unicef has recognized Prayas as the Best Practice in South Asia in Juvenile Justice by documenting Prayas Observation Home the document Juvenile Justice System in South Asia.

A Child's Profile

Name: Sartaj

Age: 12 years

Education level of parents: Illiterate

Education history of the child: Never been to school

Sartaj came to Prayas shelter home on 15th September 2000 after being referred to Prayas Shelter Home for Girls for care and protection by Butterflies Childline. Her father Abdul is a rag picker and though he has deserted the family long time back, he often comes home and physically abuses the family members and insists her mother to give him money. Her mother used to sell old clothes at Jama Masjid for livelihood before her right hand was amputated.

A recent home investigation revealed that Sartaj's mother is living in a small *jhuggi* along with her brother and his family. The *Jhuggi* is located in very dense populated area with no proper drainage system. Because of poor conditions back at home Sartaj's two brothers are also living in Prayas children home for boys, Jahangirpuri and one elder sister is living along with her in shelter home.

Before coming to Prayas Sartaj was not exposed to any kind of formal schooling and could barely write her name. At Prayas she was enrolled in Alternative Education center and today she is

studying in sixth standard in a formal school. She is getting scholarship for securing highest marks in the class. Sartaj has a great interest in drawing, dancing & painting and has got prizes in many competitions. She likes to read and write poems in her free time.

Poverty however has not deterred her from pursuing her education and ambition. As a teenager she is very clear about her future. "I am very much optimistic about my future and I want to become a pilot", she says emphatically. "I like to fly high up in the sky".

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