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Maaza Maharashtra Maaza Sahabhag

A monthly newsletter highlighting activities of the Children's Parliaments in Maharashtra

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EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

A vacation, no matter a long one or short is always welcome and I hope that the children from your respective Bal Sabhas have enjoyed their Diwali vacations to their fullest and now look forward to going back to school.

On November 14 we celebrate children's day and I'm sure you would have planned some or the other activity for children. We look forward to receiving reports and images of these activities so that we can showcase them in our monthly Newsletter.

Another important event takes place in the month of November, and that is, UNCRC celebrates 30 years. It was on 20th November 1989 that the convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly. 30 years after its adoption, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most ratified UN Treaty and has played a central role to improve the lives of children everywhere, to be free from discrimination, violence and neglect.

On this occasion, UNICEF Maharashtra has identified 30 children from various districts of Maharashtra who have stood up for child rights and have strived to bring about a change either in themselves or in the community. We share a few such stories through this newsletter.

Lastly, we are sure that in your own communities you would have children who have done some remarkable work which needs appreciation. We have this platform ready with us and we await such stories.

- The Editorial Team



CRC 30 YEARS

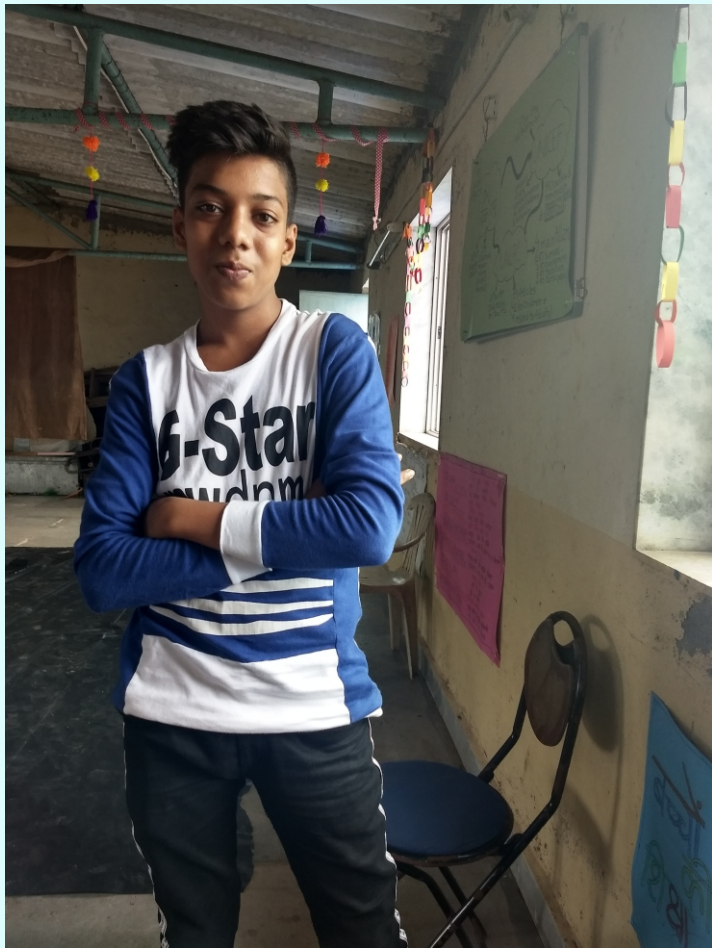
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



UN Convention
on the
Rights of the Child

“You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do.”

AMAN'S INSPIRATIONAL TRANSFORMATION



Armed with knowledge on child rights, Aman started working for the Vote for Me Campaign; “Since we don't have the right to vote ourselves, we wanted to ensure that adults vote for our well-being. We talked to parents, teachers and neighbours to make children's welfare an agenda in political manifestos in our communities.” he says confidently.

Seeing his commitment to making child rights a reality, volunteers from PRATYeK nominated his name for being the ambassador from Maharashtra to the Delhi UNICEF event where he got to meet a well-known YouTuber and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Lilly Singh. Along with his fellow child ambassadors he advocated for Lilly to make videos about child rights, safety at home and violence against children.

Today, when he looks around his community, he sees how children themselves are unaware about the injustices being meted out to them. So, the group decided to host a survey with the adults to map how parents treat children. They went from house to house speaking to parents about the urgent need to invest time, love and attention in their child's future.

His transformation from a shy boy who couldn't even speak in front of his classmates, to leading state-level campaigns for advocacy on child rights, is truly inspirational.

In 2016, PRATYeK (a non-governmental organization in Mumbai (and knowledge partner of Maaza Maharashtra Maaza Sahabhag project) started working for advocating child rights with children in Aman Gupta's neighbourhood. After intensive engagement with child rights, the children formed their own Bal Sabha or Children's Parliament. They took up issues of disposal of waste and created forums for awareness of children's rights - both with parents and their children. They interacted with their audience through street plays, flash mobs and posters which they created.

“ You have the right to a good quality education. You should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level you can.”

“ You have the right to play and rest.”

STRUGGLE FOR A SAFE SCHOOL



they approach the Gram Panchayat. Accompanied by around 20 children, he met the with the panchayat members and placed their concerns before them. But there was no change in the situation. Next, they met the village elders. Even this did not yield any result.

Around this time, as an exposure visit, the Bal Sabha children went to visit a police station. The local police inspector proved to be approachable and friendly. Ganesh gathered his strength and confided in the police inspector about their concerns on safety at school.

Two days later, the police team landed up at the village. They held a meeting with the villagers and reprimanded them. They warned the villagers of strict action if the school premises was littered again. The warning from the police helped, as Ganesh's school is now clean again. The children can play and roam around without fear. "Our village is our own responsibility. Don't fear and speak up for your rights," is an appeal that Ganesh wants to make to other children world over.

One of the main problems faced by the children of a hamlet under Panvel Taluka was lack of safety in school. Alcoholics used to sit in the school compound and create a mess. When the children came to school the next day, they would find pieces of glass from the broken bottles, strewn all over which proved harmful for the children. The food waste also used to stink and cause health hazards.

Ganesh Kathkari, brought this to the notice of his supplementary class teacher who suggested that

AN EFFORT TO TRANSFORM AN IDEAL VILLAGE TO REALITY



a good understanding of the issues pertaining to their village. From sanitation/public health to other social issues to personality development; nothing is beyond the understanding of the children.

There was an issue of garbage in their village. People used to throw trash on the streets and all public places were littered. Shradha says, 'We took up the topic of garbage management in our Bal Sabha for discussion. The Garbage Van should collect garbage from all the households, we decided. That would put an end to trash that is thrown in public places. We went to the Panchayat with the proposal of arranging for the garbage collection can. The Bal Sabha members wrote a letter to the Panchayat members. Children went from house to house to speak with adults about the garbage collection through a van. Unmanaged litter gives rise to diseases- we explained. Finally, elders conceded and the proposal for Garbage Collection Van was passed in the Panchayat. The issue of garbage was settled.'

Ensuring girls' participation, advocating for child rights and mobilizing youth for solid waste management are phenomenal mountains to move even for adults. But Shradha Karmore who is part of the Bal Sabha, facilitated by our network partner WorldVision has been undertaking these uphill tasks for several years now. Shradha and her fellow parliamentarians are aware of their rights as children and citizens; they also have

RIGHT TO USE PUBLIC SPACES



their daughters to the ground. The girls themselves did not go there, even if they wished to, because they felt unsafe,” she says.

Pooja was sufficiently moved to take the lead as part of the CCDT child protection committee and wrote to the corporator to install lights in the playground. “We also met the police and requested them to patrol the ground. The police understood our problems and now there is a police van near the ground,” she says.

These efforts paid off and the girls began using the playground. She says her real victory came when she helped organise a kho kho tournament in the playground for girls. “I feel proud that girls could use the playground, which was earlier occupied by boys,” Pooja says with a smile on her face.

She is thoughtful when asked about the question of children's rights, especially of girls. “Boys get better treated than girls, which is why girls and boys have different rights. But why should girls not be treated at par with boys?” she questions.

Pooja Pasi is a member of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) of Committed Communities Development Trust (CCDT), an NGO as well as the CPC at the local ward level and her grasp on civic concerns and the problems of the slum she resides in, are remarkable. She is particularly outspoken on the matter of girls' rights. “There is a playground in Shivaji Nagar, the sole playground in the area. Here, only boys were visible. They would drink and smoke and there was very little lighting. Parents did not like sending

SAFETY, FIRST PRIORITY



Her Bal Sabha group read the Play it Safe report by UNICEF and the Nine is Mine campaign. “The report talked about what children thought is violence and safe spaces. Take for example, the fact that most children are abused at home by someone they know. Where are we safe really then?”

The advocacy for a more equal and safe childhood started in their community and families itself. Sandhya and her co-parliamentarians started raising the questions of garbage disposal, children's rights to play, especially girls' rights to play in the evening. Through street plays, flash mobs, dance and puppets, they talked about the importance of child rights in their own locality and schools.

Recently, Sandhya also gave a TeDTalk, speaking about her own journey of standing up for children's rights and Sandhya's message to other children is “Learn about your rights and fight for them. Become aware. Only when all of us come together, can we fight.”

Sandhya's engagement with child rights began two and a half years back, with PRATYek, who build capacities of children for civic action.

Sandhya heads the Child Parliament in her community today. Through sustained engagement with PRATYek's sessions on child rights, Sandhya was convinced that children are not just the future citizens of the country, but are citizens right now. Once the realization hit, she was determined to work hard for other children who also deserved a chance at an equal future.

CHILD MARRIAGE CAMPAIGN

11th October is marked as the International day of the girl child. It is a day of global celebration of adolescent girls to recognise the fact that if we unlock their potential by providing them the power of education and skill, we can build a healthier, more just and prosperous world.

And since child marriage is still prevalent in many districts of Maharashtra, UNICEF Maharashtra held a Child Marriage Campaign from 10th to 20th October, urging parents, schools, govt, citizens and children, to stand up against child marriage which is a gross violation of the rights of girls that denies them their rights to education, to health and to live in safety and security.

Our Network Partners held discussions about the ills of child marriage and the importance of education and girls and took a pledge against child marriage.

NAVJEET COMMUNITY CENTRE



AROGYA PRABHODINI



WORLDVISION

PRATHAN EDUCATION TRUST



Right To Participation

enjoy own

culture

talk

speech

sing

opportunity

dance

opinion

Play

collecting
information



NAME:- FACKSON

&
RALSTON.