

**Report
On
Consultation with Faith leaders on violence against Children**



Date-27.3.2017

Venue-Hotel Excellency

Organised by- Odisha Alliance for child rights(OACR) and National Action and Coordination Group to End Violence against Children (NACG-EVAC), Odisha and India Alliance for child rights (IACR)

A brief Report :

One of the major evil practices attached to our society is violence against children. Children are victims of untold violence in every sphere of society which become high concerned of social activists and stakeholders. Violence against children exists in different forms such as child labour harmful traditional practices, child marriage, child abuse, child trafficking, the absence of parental care and commercial sexual exploitation, corporal punishment in schools.

A child can be abused physically, sexually and mentally which can be in form of injury, negligence or neglectful treatment, forced sexual stimulation and activity, incest exploitation and sexual abuse. Child abuse can take place in homes, schools, orphanages, residential child care centres, at workplace, streets, in place of custody and many more places like that. Violence in any forms like child marriage, child labour, child abuse, child trafficking has a very deep impact on child's health, survival, development and dignity.

So in these sphere faith leaders can play a vital role to protect them from any kind of violence for that different types of discourses is needed on Eliminating Harmful Practices affecting children in Odisha based on Traditions, Culture, Religion and superstitions.

In order to foster a better understanding of the inter faiths group in State, OACR and NACG –EVAC Odisha can cultivate a meaningful partnership with different groups to end violence against children,

Religious leaders have an extraordinary moral authority and convey a deep sense of compassion, solidarity and justice, which help to bridge differences, fostering dialogue and influencing positive social changes. Using positive examples from religious texts such Ramayan ,Bhagabat Gita etc they can help to ensure respect for the human dignity of the child and bring an end to all forms of violence.

With this objective in mind a State Level Consultation was held with participation of different faith leaders organised by Odisha Alliance for child rights and National Action and Coordination Group to End Violence against Children (NACG-EVAC), Odisha and India Alliance for child rights (IACR) on 27th March 2017 at Hotel Excellency, Bhubaneswar.

Many eminent personalities civil society organisations, social scientists thinkers and religious leaders, media shared their valuable ideas towards ending the child violence through awareness ,education and social action.

The consultation was chaired by Mr.Ranjan Kumar Mohanty, Chairman of OACR . He said, in order to stop child labour, child marriage, corporal punishment, child trafficking citizens especially faith leaders from different religious centre must come forward and join hands to end violence against children in relation to it education and awareness in society can play a major role in it. He emphasized

on even if religious leaders adhere to what they consider to be absolute truths, they should base them on ethical and human rights principles, they should be role models within their communities; preach the value of fraternity in humanity and contribute to educating the population on social issues, child rights principle and should develop an inter-faith code of conduct for preaching, based on ethical and human rights principles that should become a blueprint for all religious leaders.

Speaking in the consultation Ms Razia Ismal, Head, IACR pointed out that the basic issue before all faiths and cultures was to uphold human rights, which apply universally to all children and to unitedly work for all children's safety and dignity

As "Humanity being the core theme of all religion it is important to respect every human being whether an adult or a child, for this a child is raised to grow gracefully with the right form of education and gainfully employed thereafter, the society would grow a healthy nation. Hence it is the duty of every parent to encourage the hidden talents of their children and groom them in such a way that they can grow themselves to a healthy personality, for this parent needs to create a healthy environment for their children so that they can grow internally as well as externally. They must teach their children to love others help them to understand their internal qualities and external challenges that they may face at any moment of their life. By emphasizing on rights of children she said, "Neglecting the rights of children is greatest violence of human rights. Though rights are there in our law but these rights are not functioning properly therefore less law breakers are found guilty in front of law due to which many law breakers are been released in more numbers. Children need more protection and care in family, school in relation to their health, education. The basic issue before all faiths and cultures was to uphold human rights which apply universally to all the children and to work unitedly for children's safety and dignity". Though we have many laws to act stop violence against children. There is need of proper understanding and support from each corner for implementation of law. we ignore to know it and even ignore to implement it. In order to create awareness among others on such laws one must have the knowledge of such laws and must know the best means of utilizing it for the welfare and overall development of a child. It is a dream of every parent to have a child who has a distinctive personality and walks ahead of others. Few of the children are no matter gifted with such a personality and parents for those kids do not need to take any extra efforts to make them more distinctive than the rest. But for those parents whose children need extra care and motivation for them more efforts is required in order to develop them into a better personality and help them to walk ahead in life".

Ms. Alka Gupta, UNICEF by focusing on child right said that, "UNICEF protects and defends the rights of every child and works for child education, health and

ensures that basic needs of every child is fulfilled and their rights are protected". UNICEF started immunization programme & WASH programme in 1980 by which lakhs of children were prevented from dangerous diseases. Global Alliance has initiated different sanitation projects in many villages of India due to which many families were prevented from acquiring dangerous diseases. She also told how parents have important role for physical and mental growth of a child. Family is the first institution where a child learns to know about him and her. In the history of human rights, the rights of children are the most ratified. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child defines child rights as the minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be afforded to every citizen below the age of 18 regardless of race, national origin colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origin wealth, birth status, disability or other character. These rights encompass freedom of children and their civil rights family environment, necessary health care and welfare, education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

Mr Anangadev Singh and Mrs Nirmala , World vision gave a brief presentation on world vision initiatives for ending violence against children. World vision started a campaign across the country to end violence against children and the activities for ending violence against children includes promotion of children collectives, vocational training and promotion of child protection committee.

Mr Uttam Kumar Kar, ASHRA Vision gave his point of view on violation of child rights; he opined that a child has no religion; he/she has the right to live, grow, participate and feel protected. When the child is losing his/her right to live, right to grow, right to protection, right to development and participation then we can say that the rights of the child has been violated. Family, Friends/peers, school, neighborhood must develop a safe & friendly environment for a child so that the child will feel protected. He suggested that, everyone must evaluate the real situations/needs of the child and take appropriate step to protect the child. Ground work on the rights of children should be done by the children, parents, peers/friends and schools and educate all the stake holders on child rights and develop a consortium for child rights at State level having different partners from various sectors such as NGO, GO, CSO and FBO.

Mr Badri Narayan Pattanaik,Viswa Hindu Parishad by citing the **prominence of the** Indian Society said that "the extended family members typically live together in one large household rather than maintaining their own separate homes. The father is the head of the household, especially when dealing with outsiders and the mother traditionally follows his lead. Children are expected to be obedient and respectful towards their parents and other elders and to take care of parents as they get older. Children are also expected to do well in studies as

education is highly pivotal in our society. With Hinduism as the most prominent form of religion in the Indian Culture many Indian families impart the importance of prayer and worship to their children. There is a strong emphasis on respect of elders in the Indian culture. Children typically grow up with their grandparents in the same household. Traditional Indian families tend to be more disciplined and their children show more aggressive and stern manner.

Four types of teachers like adyagru, shikhyaguru, sadguru and Jagadguru have important roles to make the society pure and advanced. Presently teachers are running after money instead of giving importance on character building a student. Moral education is not given more importance in most of the schools. Parents and teachers are responsible for degradation of the children. Therefore more priority needs to be given on value education especially at school. Parents and teachers should be oriented properly about child care, especially related to their physical and mental growth.

Prof. Kabyatara Panigrahi, BAHAI House said that, “Humanity is religion. Mother’s attitude and behavior affect the physical & mental growth of a child. Bahai Religion published many books on parental care and behavior of children. Bahai followers include many doctors, Engineers, teachers who go to slum areas and work for the children. Ultimately healthy personality development & fostered parenting plays a sensitive and responsive role in increasing individual strengths and fulfilling the needs of a child”.

Sri Mayadhara Behera, from Gayatri Shaktipitha said that, “Govt. education policies are not properly implemented though crores of rupees are spent; still we find many children do not perceive elementary education. He suggested parents should encourage children to take admission in government schools rather than in private schools, moral education needs to be one of the main subject in schools and it should be imparted in each and every school. Teachers should teach each & every student about good behavior and must create an excellent environment where a student will free to express his/her own problems”.

Mrs. Anuradha Mohanty, PECUC said that, “Faith leaders need to break the silence of barriers and must carry out different awareness programs in various religious ceremonies & festivals. By giving importance to child club committee she said that, “Every village must form a child protection committee so that the message will be spread at every nook and corner of the society”.

Bishop D.B. Hrudya, OFU, said that, “As children are the facade of tomorrow therefore attempt should be made to inculcate in them all the characteristics of humanitarian and help them to grow intellectually, emotionally and socially. When parents realize these things there will be less strain on both parents and children. Parents must act as a powerful ally like God and provide immense opportunity to

their children to develop themselves into gospel living. Bible says, “Children are most important and valuable part of God’s Kingdom and children are directly connected to God’s heart, therefore one must adore that they have children. It also says that everyone must love, respect and care children and continuous efforts must be made to teach children how they should live a peaceful and graceful life”

Mohd. Shahanawaz, President Zama Masjid said, “The Quran in 19 versus forbids harsh and oppressive treatment of orphaned children while urging kindness and justice towards them. The Quran speaks of the reward waiting for those who feed orphans, poor and the prisoner children have the right to be fed clothed and protected until they reach adulthood and they must have the respect to enjoy, love and affection from their parents. Children have the right to be treated equally as they are the gifts of God. The child has the right to enjoy all his/her freedom and no one can force them or indulge them in any activities which will harm them. Though Islam has given parents so much right on their children that does not means that the parents can ill-treat their children or deprive or ban them from any kind of right such as birthright or property right of the Preference of a parent for one child over the other is considered according to Islam as an act of injustice.

Sk. Manohar Ahmed, President, All Odisha Madrasa Teachers Association by giving importance to Madrassa said that, “There are 167 Madrasha in Odisha, but government is doing nothing for the development Madrassa like other government school Madrassa students are not provided with dress or MDM meal and teachers are not getting actual salary. Like other schools Madrassa must also have that much importance and government must take necessary steps to provide basic necessities to the children of madrassa

Mrs Rubi Rout, Adoption Centrum “Education plays a vital part in every life of children as a child growth as well his economic growth is depended how much a child perceives quality education. Marriage registration must be made compulsory in the society whether it is in the urban or rural areas, in this case Media must play a advanced role in creating awareness among the people by bring a check & balance on violence against girl children.

Krishna Gopal Dash, Radhakanta Matha opined that, “In our Hindu society children are punished for their small mistakes so that in future they would realize their mistakes and go in a righteous path. Sanskars starts from home and this helps a child to learn how to cope with difficult situation and live a happy life” At family Mother is the first teacher of a child so efforts must be made to educate mother and make her aware that how she will take care of her child and develop her child into a good and responsible human being”.

Arya Kumar Gyanendra, Arya Samaj said that “Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati, who is a Hindu religious leader and the objective of

establishing such samaj was to bring reform through Hindu reform movements of the Vedic tradition. Swami Dayananda was also a renowned scholar of the Vedic lore and Sanskrit language. He believed in the infallible authority of the Vedas. He said, “Indian Hindu Reform Movement promotes values and it is based on the practices of infallibility of the Vedas”. He also said that, “Sanskar or reformation should begin from the family and in schools teachers must take responsibility on them and build the career of students and impart good characters among them”. He emphasized on sex education and said “it should be imparted to the students at teen age and must be included in science subject”. Now days working young parents are often in dilemma in putting their children into the best play schools, in urban areas there are numerous play schools and parents want to send their babies to best play school so that teachers can give extra care and attention to the babies. He talked about life skill education and said life skill education plays a integral part in every life of a children therefore children must be taught life skills like interacting with other children and forming bonds, spending quality time with friends, peer groups, and bring new innovations, basic things in life is very important for the overall development of a child. Parents must give quality time to their children and develop a strong bonding among them, so that a child will able to share all their problems, happiness and day to day events that is taking place in their life. Parents should allocate time for their children and show intense interest in their development and ensure that they must grow themselves into a good human being”.

Biswa Pattanaik said that, many evil practices like Child Marriage of a girl child is tied knot with snakes, dogs and such beliefs is more prevalent among tribal people in different parts of Odisha. During any kind of disease a child is taken to the quack rather to a nearest hospital to PHC or CHC and their the quarks treat the infants like an animal and give different medicines and does branding with hot iron rods and do all kinds of black magic on the child. Lack of awareness among parents leads to disaster. Therefore Proper healthcare must be provided in those tribal belts, optimum health and nutrition status of children is essential as they represent a vital resource of our country. He said that, “India has very high infant and child mortality rates. While the IMR has declined over the years but it is as high in 72 rural areas”. The children who do survive are beset by infection, diarrhea and malnutrition. The most common reasons for their ill health is lack of proper health facilities, nutrition and ignorance of parent, poor-socio economic conditions and repeated infections.

Sj.Ranjan Kumar Mohanty, Chairman of OACR gave few valuable suggestions for ending violence against children:-

- Violence against children has widespread but can be curbed with political will, money and change in attitude and thinking of society.

- It is not just parents who have an impact on child overall development but other family members also play a major role like Grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers, counsellors and family friends can serve as positive role models for child.
- Encourage kind compassionate and ethical people must be involved in child's lives from the get go.
- One must help their child to develop a conscience within themselves:-
 - (a) Being attuned to the children
 - (b) By not being violent toward or in front of them,
 - (c) Providing a secure, safe base for them.
- We all make mistakes as parents, but openly admitting and apologising for these mistakes by showing our children that we humans and being a human being there is chance of making mistakes unknowingly.
- Depriving a kid in need of services and contact hurts them; their behavior indicates that they need more adult contact. Teach your children good ways to calm down when they are upset. The best way to do this is to lead by citing them examples. It is important to demonstrate your own resilience, problem solving and coping strategies in front of your children.
- Parents and teachers have important roles in curbing the child violence in the society. So the awareness programmes must be organised in different sectors of the society by social activists and organisations to improve child care facilities in child care centres and schools.
- Rules and laws must be strictly followed by stake holders.

Smt. Kasturi Mohapatra, Chairperson, OSCPCR by mentioning the figure of child sexual abuse said that, “About 53% of children in India face some or the other form of sexual abuse. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, the cases of rape and murder of children are constantly increases every year. The growing complexities of life and the changing social economic conditions have exposed the children to new and different forms of abuse. But the sad thing is that such heinous acts are reported less due to which it has psychological impact on the mind of a child that seldom gathers the courage to speak about the act being committed against him/her. If even if he/she confides the fact with someone, the social factors let the fact being dumped under the fear of family reputation and other related issues, therefore child abuse is a violation of the basic human rights of a child”. She said that, “Out of the eight Millennium Development Goals six of them are based on rights of the children which ensure child's health, education protection and equality. These goals can sustain if the rights of every child is protected. Advocacy research and action based research can create a protective environment that will allow every

child to live the best part of his/her life. Ensure every girl and even boy a quality education. Safe guards every child against disease and disability, especially from HIV/AIDs, shields every child from violence abuse expectation and discrimination”.

To end the violence against children she gave some valuable suggestions:-

- Stop violence against them and take excess care of children so that you can create a healthy personality of a child.
- III practices and wrong believe prevail in many communities so create awareness programme on it.
- Child marriage is one of the issues that needs more attention for that we can do different awareness programme and disseminate different literatures and leaflets on laws/acts related to stopping of child marriages
- Teachers and parents should be aware about laws.
- Children’s must be given different trainings on protecting themselves from any kind of violence, phone numbers, format of how to write applications and to whom needs to be taught to the children in schools .
- Reporting mechanism should be developed.

To conclude a Core committee was formed for further planning and defining role of Faith leaders for ending violence against children

Members of core committees

1. Krushna Gopal Dash, Radhakanta Matha
2. Bishop.D.B. Hrudya, OFU
3. Md.Shahnawaz President Mosque Committee,
4. Mayadhar Behera, Gayatri Sakhti Pitha
5. Dr. Prof Kabyaitara Panigarhi, Bahai Foundation
6. Arya Kumar Gyanendra, Arya Samaj
7. Dr. Badrinath Pattnaik, Viswa Hindu Parishad
8. SS Talatuf
9. Uttam ku. Kar
10. S B Tanbir

The consultation was ended with a vote of thanks by Mr K.K.Swain, Executive committee member, OACR.