APPENDIX-7

FORUM FOR CHILD RIGHTS, VIJAYAWADA

Introduction

Several voluntary organizations have been working for the welfare of children in the city of Vijayawada for many years. The last 15 years have seen the arrival of organizations specifically for handling street children. Vijayawada is very well known as the pioneering city in the state of Andhra Pradesh to care for such deprived children. However, the service rendered by these organizations though exceptionally commendable, remained more or less in isolation from one another. The disadvantages of such a situation, such as lack of a common platform for collective action for the benefit of these children at risk, was becoming more and more apparent in the minds of several of the city elders.

To remedy the situation, Forum For Child Rights, Vijayawada was set up on August 14, 1997 with the then Mayor of the city, Mr. T. Venkateswara Rao, as its Ex-Officio President. The Forum includes NGOs working for the cause of the children at risk, activists, well wishers and philanthropists in the city. The main objectives are: to take steps to make Vijayawada a city that respects and practice the rights of the child; to take steps to ensure protection for every child that seeks shelter in this city; to encourage and support ventures that promote the interests of children in insecure situations; to educate every adult citizen, and especially those holding official responsibilities in their duties towards children; to ensure that the government observation home for boys becomes a place where the child is provided opportunities for “all round growth and development of his personality”; and also to ensure that the neglected children are not ‘confined’ in observation homes along with the delinquents.

The Forum's objectives can be summed up in its vision: "Make Vijayawada A Child Friendly City".
Some of Forum's past undertakings were the adoption and renovation of Children's Ward of University General Hospital, yearly city level mela participating more than 1000 street children, a State level street children mela with a two day workshop for them, Cultural Nights, yearly celebration of International Child Rights day, activities of advocacy when the children are abused or exploited mainly by employers or bullies, awareness activities among street children and the public about child rights, AIDS and other serious diseases affecting street children and a two day workshop with the Commissionerate of Police on child rights for the police officers in the city. As a follow-up a series of training sessions, spread over the next two years are in the offing for the police personnel as part of making police more child friendly. All these successful undertakings are the collective efforts of the member NGOs of the Forum.

With the Forum's initiative in hand with the then MLA (Vijayawada West), Mr. K. Suba Raju, a House Committee was formed by the State Government to study the problems of street children within the state. Due to its recommendations, many initiatives were undertaken by the State Government, including the release of rice @ Rs. 4 per kg to the organizations working for the rehabilitation of street children.

With Forum's initiative, first time, the Municipal Corporation allotted a yearly budget of Rs. 2 lakhs. The Corporation distributes two pairs of clothes to all the street children being rehabilitated by different organizations within the city.

**CHILDLINE VIJAYAWADA**

The latest but the crowning achievement of the Forum is perhaps the opening of CHILDLINE in Vijayawada on 20th November 2000, on International Child Rights Day. It was necessitated by the growing number of cases of advocacy the Forum, in collaboration with its member NGOs, had taken in the past. In spite of these best efforts, number of abuses of children at risk are on the rise. Perhaps, due to the past interventions
and awareness programmes, the children and the public began to approach more than ever the Forum and its member NGOs.

Presently, Forum operates efficiently the CHILDLINE without outside support with the volunteers from its different member NGOs. Already within the two months of its existence, it has undertaken few serious advocacy cases registered through the toll free number either by the affected children themselves or adults on their behalf. Records are being maintained meticulously. Awareness campaign on CHILDLINE and the toll free number is being organized within the city.

INTEGRATION PROCESS INTO NATIONAL CHILDLINE FAMILY

The Forum members had their first discussion with the representative of the CHILDLINE India Foundation (CIF) on 3rd December 2000 in Vijayawada regarding the integration of CHILDLINE, Vijayawada, into the National Childline Foundation.

Making an exception to the conventional structure, especially regarding the nature of Nodal and Collaborating Organization, CIF has agreed to the proposal of the Forum For Child Rights, Vijayawada, that it would be the nodal and collaborative organization. The Sub-Committee within the Forum and which presently takes care of the running of the CHILDLINE shall take the place of the individual ‘collaborating organization’ envisaged in the set structure of the national CHILDLINE service.

The exception is allowed as a special case as Vijayawada is smaller when compared to other big cities like Mumbai, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi. Moreover, Forum for Child Rights, Vijayawada, is deemed to be a successful model network of city based NGOs and individuals, working since three years, in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation and the police for the cause of Child Rights.

The formation of the envisaged CHILDLINE Advisory Board (CAB) is very much in the process. The CAB would comprise of District Collector and the senior representatives from the allied system such as: the police, health care, Municipal Corporation, railways,
education, juvenile justice system, media and academic organizations. A representative from the NGO Forum would also be part of the CAB.

The Area of Operation
The Forum’s direct area of operation is in and around the city of Vijayawada. It takes special efforts, in collaboration with its member NGOs, to tackle the problems faced by the displaced and deprived children on the street who come to Vijayawada city from all the districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh. In that broad sense, indirectly, Forum’s area of operation extends to all over the state.

C. Support Organizations
The Forum at present makes elaborate measures to incorporate more NGOs and personnel of different allied systems who are ready to dedicate themselves to collaborate with the initiatives of child protection.

The following constitute the present list of the support organizations and allied systems, which are presently, collaborate with the Forum in its initiatives for child protection. These constitute the first entries of CHILDLINE Resource Directory.

PAST UNDERTAKINGS

1. Street Children Mela, Vijayawada City:
The International Child Rights Day – is fittingly celebrated each year by the Forum by organizing a city level Street Children Mela. The Mela gives a real opportunity to demonstrate the fruits arising out of networking for the sake of deprived and disadvantaged children. The mela gives over three thousand street children and working children an occasion to come together and to have their own identity.

2. Govt. Hospital wards renovation:
One of the main results on the concretization process and collaboration initiated by the Forum was the renovation of Children’s ward at University General Hospital in the city with the help of individuals and NGOs committed to the cause of these deprived and
displaced children. On May 26, 1998, the renovated ward was inaugurated by Smt. Padala Aruna, the then honourable Minister for Women Development and Child Welfare, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

3. The House Committee on Rehabilitation of Street Children:
With the Forum’s initiative in hand with the then MLA (Vijayawada West), Mr. K. Subba Raju, a House Committee was formed by the State Government to study the problems of street children within the state. Due to its recommendations, many initiatives were undertaken by the State Government, including the release of rice @ Rs. 4 per kg to the organizations working for the rehabilitation of street children.

4. A Special Budget for Street Children:
With the efforts of Forum, for the first time in the history of Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, an account head was added in its annual budget with an amount of Rs. 2 lakhs for the rehabilitation of street children. As a result apart from other welfare measures, the Municipal Corporation is distributing two pair’s cloths to 400 street children.

5. State Level Street Children’s Convention:
A state level street children’s convention was organized by the Forum last year from December 10-11, 1999. His Excellency Dr. C. Rangarajan, Governor, inaugurated the convention. Cultural Competitions for the city school’s children, sports and games and cultural nights for more than 1500 street children from all over the state were organized during the three days of the convention. More over a two day workshop on the problems faced by street children, with 150 participants (street children, city elders and officials of various departments), was also conducted.

6. Hepatitis’ B Vaccination Programme
With the help of TANA (Telugu Association of North America) Forum for Child Rights vaccinated nearly 1700 street children in two phases.
7. State Level Public Hearing Meeting (Voice for Voiceless):
The forum hosted the State level Public Hearing Programme on Violation of Child Rights ("Voice for Voiceless") and could bring tremendous awareness among general public about importance of child rights and its violations.

8. VMC TANA Rescue Shelter
Forum for Child Rights constructed a rescue shelter for children in need of care and protection with the financial support of TANA (Telugu Association of North America). The building was inaugurated on December 7th 2004.

9. Peace rally:
Forum has conducted a big rally with nearly 700 children in solidarity for child victims in war. This rally was conducted mainly for peace.

10. Sensitization workshops for allied systems:
Forum also conducted the workshops for allied systems like Police, RPF, GRP, Women and Child Welfare Dept., Media, etc and trying to make them sensitized towards children.

11. Anti Child Labour Week Celebrations:
Forum for Child Rights is conducting anti child Labour week celebrations to make the people aware about the child Labour issue in the city. The celebrations of anti child Labour week is generating tremendous impact on public

12. Cultural and Awareness programmes for Children:
Forum has prepared a cultural group with street children and conducts the street plays with them on various social issues and problems.
13. Visit of Governor to Forum’s Home:

His Excellency Governor, C. Rangarajan visited SKCV Children’s Village; one of the Forum’s Member Organizations and attended the activities of the Form, organized in SKCV’s premises.

14. Year-long campaign against Domestic Child Workers:

Forum is conducting year-long campaign against the Domestic Child Workers, which includes the survey, pasting posters and stickers, conducting street plays on child Labour supply zones, sensitizing apartments and residential colonies’ secretaries to prevent employing the children in their respective Apartments. This campaign is launched with the support of Forum President, Mayor of the City, in the presences of Dist Collector, Commissioner of Police, Municipal Commissioner, Asst. Labour Commissioner, Project Director, NCLP, Project Director, and Women & Child Welfare Department.