

Juvenile Justice Newsletter

Monthly Newsletter of Activities Concerning Child Protection in Assam

Editorial

Children in general are considered as the most vulnerable sections of the society and they demand a protective environment till they attain the age of adulthood. But there are certain sections of the population wherein the entire community are vulnerable, which makes their children even more prone to vulnerabilities. Children from Adivasi communities who are also known as Tea Tribe community are prone to various deplorable and multifaceted problems like (domestic) child labour, child marriage, trafficking, illiteracy, etc. and a child devoid from his childhood and his basic rights.

UNICEF's Assam Field Office in this regard, to ameliorate the conditions of children of these vulnerable communities has partnered with Ethical Tea Partners (ETP), London to work towards the betterment of children by addressing issues and concerns in few select Tea-Estates of Assam. The initial launch of the programme would cover 104 tea gardens and 350 villages across Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Tinisukia.

This edition of News-Letter also brings news from a consultation on Participatory Communication with children. The consultation focused on the importance of media and its role in providing open spaces for children to express and voice their thoughts. Both print and electronic media proactiveness and responsibility for promoting participatory communication of children is one of the stories of this month's news letter.

Editorial Board,
State Child Protection Society, Assam

Symposium on Promotion of Child rights in Tea Estates in Assam

Although the Tea Communities represent approximately 17 per cent of the State's population in Assam, their assimilation within mainstream Assamese society has been somewhat limited by their relative geographic isolation. The Tea Communities are, among the most marginalized and socially excluded groups in Assam, with poor development indicators, exacerbated by traditional social norms such as child marriage and child labour. Upper Assam, which has the maximum tea gardens in state, has the highest Maternal Mortality Ratio in the state with 404. Education, especially for adolescent girls from the marginalized tea communities still poses challenges due to concerns relating to access, language, and more importantly due to marriage and employment during adolescence.

To address the issues, UNICEF Assam has partnered with Ethical Tea Partners (ETP). Tea Communities have been identified as the focus of UNICEF Assam's Social Inclusion and Equity Programming in the State. Given their culture and traditions, they have a much higher incidence of early marriage, making girl children especially vulnerable to this practice. The learning from the ongoing child protection interventions at the tea garden level, as well as, from the upscale advocacy with the state government in Assam has shown that children and adolescents are vulnerable to a range of child protection concerns, including sex trafficking, exploitative and bonded labour, physical and sexual abuse within the domestic household and in the community. Alcoholism and inadequate parenting skills in adults exacerbate the protection concerns of dependent children and adolescents in tea communities.

Assam contributes close to 51% of the total tea production of India. Out of 27 districts of the state, tea is cultivated in 16 districts of Assam (59% of the total districts), with varied intensity and quality.

Women and Children from the tea communities of Assam form a core focus area and pivot of UNICEF, Assam's programming on social inclusion and equity in the state. As of date, most of UNICEF's programmes are based in the district of Dibrugarh, with extended coverage in two of the adjacent and contiguous upper Assam districts, namely, Tinisukia and Sivasagar. On the other hand, UNICEF is also engaged with various other Government initiatives, particularly, through Health, Nutrition and WASH sectors, in other tea- intensive districts, such as, Golaghat, Nagaon, Hailakandi and Sonitpur.

The proposed intervention in the state of Assam, which is a significant contributor to tea production in the country, will focus on strengthening child protection systems and integrating and addressing children's rights issues, promoting responsible business practices and building the capacities of the tea supply chain, with specific

¹ UNICEF Assam Field Office

focus on tea gardens of Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Tinisukia districts in Assam. In the three districts of Dibrugarh, Tinisukia and Sivasagar of Assam, initial interventions have been implemented over the past six years, and therefore, the focus of the proposed 3 years project (2015- 2017) will be on up-scaling and reaching out to more tea gardens as well as covering tea communities, who live in villages (with a legacy connection to the tea industry), but continue to face deprivations that are faced by those who live on the tea gardens. It is pertinent to mention here that a large section of the 'casual' or 'temporary' workforce of tea gardens live in these villages that are mostly located in the periphery of the tea gardens in the mentioned districts.

Coverage of the project: 104 tea gardens and 350 villages across Dibrugarh, Sivasagar and Tinisukia districts of Assam to empower and safeguard young people, with a focus on adolescent girls, in communities around tea estates within the focus regions. Besides, 63 additional tea estates in these 3 districts will also be involved with various capacity building and advocacy initiatives under the project.

The overall aim of the multilateral partnership being anchored by UNICEF with ETP's support would be to:

a) Strengthen child protection system in Assam with a particular focus on creating a protective environment for the most marginalized and socially excluded children and adolescents from the tea communities; and

- b) Ensure the co-creation of best practice guidelines with ETP on child protection in the tea sector, helping to empower and safeguard young people, with a focus on adolescent girls, in communities around tea estates within the focus districts.

c) Build capacities of stakeholder groups, including Tea Estates on creating positive impact on children and youth through responsible business practices.

Key objectives of the Symposium:

- * To introduce the project with concerned stakeholders from the Government, Tea Industry, and Civil Society organizations;
- * To exchange experiences and lay out the need for convergence among various stakeholders within the project.
- * To enhance networking among key duty bearers to achieve the project outcomes.

The symposium was attended by Managing Directors and Managers from select tea companies and tea estates, senior officials from the State Labour Department, Tea-Tribe Welfare Departments, Department of Social Welfare and State Child Protection Society, senior representatives from Assam Board of Indian Tea Association and Bharatiya Chaa Parisad, NGO representatives, representatives from Labour unions, from Media and UNICEF officials. ●

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Consultation on Participatory Communication¹

Background: In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child became the first legally binding international convention to affirm human rights for all children. The CRC defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18 years. India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which provides a broad framework for all government plans and programmes related to children. 'A World Fit for Children' adopted by the UN Special Session on Children in 1990, outlines the goals for children's survival, development, protection and participation.

The Convention, adopted on 20 November 1989, is a reference against which progress in meeting human rights standards for children can be assessed, and results compared. The Convention has made children visible as rights holders. It specifies the rights to which all human beings are entitled and adapts these rights to the situation of children. And, not least important, the Convention confers upon children some rights that are not reflected in the more general human rights instruments, such as the right to be heard, the right to have all actions consider the child's best interests, and the combination of the right to life, survival and development. The thrust of the Convention is its emphasis on children as subjects of rights, that is, children as human beings in their own right; and not owned by their parents or by anyone else. To fulfil the obligations of the Convention, we need to see children as individuals, to listen to them and to take their views seriously.

While much has been achieved for children during the 25 years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the agenda for child rights is far from complete. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the building blocks for a universal agenda that protects the rights of all children, everywhere, to have the best start in life, to survive and thrive, to receive a quality education, and to live free from violence and abuse. It remains significant as a framework to guide how countries uphold the rights of their children. Its spirit and ideals must continue to drive us all to ensure a better world for children.

Purpose of the event: Child Rights has been at the centre of UNICEF's commitment in working for children in the State. UNICEF advocates for the protection of children's rights so as to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF promotes at all time, the four guiding principles as provisioned by the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the Right to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation.

Children have traditionally been excluded from the decision-making process, all over the world; and are usually not provided effective opportunities for participation. Participation of children in the decision-making process is a fundamental right in the CRC and forms the basis for all other rights. In this context, it is important to promote an active voice for children and create enabling spaces for them to express themselves. Article 17 of the Convention also highlights the role of mass media in Safeguarding the Right to Participation for children. This right will remain unrealized unless children are offered an opportunity to engage with both mainstream and social media which play a significant role in our lives-in shaping opinions and influencing the public discourse. In the case of children also, the media is a critical influencer. However, children adolescents have largely remained

passive consumers rather than active participants. For children to actively participate in an effective manner, two essential requirements will need to be in place: Children will need to develop an understanding on media as well as knowledge and skills to use media to express themselves. In fact, various tools of communication can be used by children to raise issues concerning them and the community as a whole, and generate actions to address them. Secondly, it is also important to be able to create the required spaces for children and adolescents in media.

To enable children to exercise their rights, particularly the right to participation, it is also important to realize that as adults we have a responsibility of creating effective spaces and opportunities for children and adolescents to participate in discussions and contribute to decisions affecting them. Community level platforms such as adolescent groups, panchayats, etc. can become forums for children and young people to express themselves; it turn it is also important that these voices reach the concerned places at the block, district and state levels. It is in this context that communication media becomes important- children need to learn the appropriate skills and how to use the most appropriate media tools to become effective agents of change in their community.

Objective: In the year, in which we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the UNCRC, UNICEF Assam aims to deepen our commitment to Right to Participation for children by engaging with relevant stakeholders including media professionals, participatory communication experts and children to explore and create enabling spaces for children in the media of Assam.

The event with the objective to raise the context of children's use of media and the space for children in media will reflect upon the following core areas:

- Explore the role and potential of media to provide enabling spaces for children to articulate their concerns
- Engage with media professionals and producers to sensitize them on the right to participation for children.
- Explore partnerships to build capacity of children to develop the required skills and capacity to engage with the medium and provision of effective platforms for children
- Confront the issues of ethical violations that continue to undermine media while reporting for and with children.

So as to meet the above objectives UNICEF Assam organized a one-day event on December 15 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the UNCRC and to have a consultative meet on participatory communication. The event brought together media practitioners, communication experts, and academics from national and regional level along with children from Assam. The event helped in bringing together, to a common platform, media practitioners and children, thereby enhancing the chances of creating enabling spaces for children in media of Assam in the upcoming months.

¹ UNICEF Assam Field Office

Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of November 2014

Sl. No.	Districts	Juvenile Justice Boards			Child Welfare Committees		
		No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending	No. of cases instituted	No. of cases disposed	Total cases pending
1	BAKSA	Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB			6	10	8
2	BONGAIGAON	4	5	41	4	4	7
3	BARPETA	8	6	98	0	0	2
4	CACHAR	8	5	74	4	4	5
5	CHIRANG	0	0	33	0	0	0
6	DARRANG	1	3	145	4	2	17
7	DHEMAJI	2	4	15	1	0	7
8	DHUBRI	0	6	185	6	1	13
9	DIBRUGARH	6	1	58	15	15	4
10	DIMA HASAO	0	0	3	1	0	1
11	GOALPARA	6	5	111	4	4	1
12	GOLAGHAT	8	9	28	3	3	7
13	HAILAKANDI	0	1	7	0	0	1
14	JORHAT	2	1	41	3	4	5
15	KAMRUP (M)	8	13	155	31	32	71
16	KAMRUP (R)	Cases are jointly dealt with Kamrup (M) JJB			4	6	16
17	KARBI ANGLONG	4	1	55	0	0	0
18	KARIMGANJ	3	3	50	3	0	10
19	KOKRAJHAR	4	6	167	1	1	9
20	LAKHIMPUR	1	1	28	6	5	34
21	MORIGAON	5	3	10	2	3	23
22	NAGAON	12	8	269	22	23	10
23	NALBARI	3	1	39	3	0	19
24	SONITPUR	3	6	131	6	1	42
25	SIBSAGAR	3	1	63	4	0	37
26	TINSUKIA	4	3	57	2	0	4
27	UDALGURI	4	1	20	0	0	18
Total		99	93	1883	132	118	365

Source: MIS Cell, SCPS, Assam

For any feedback, write to :
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217, Bishnu Rabha Path, Beltola, Guwahati-781028, Phone: 0361-2229275, Email: scpsassam@gmail.com, Website: assam-scps.com/termsofuse.php

DSW, Government of Assam

Lokonya Press, Guwahati-1

Status Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in Assam for the month of November 2014

Sl. No.	Districts	Juvenile Justice Boards	Child Welfare Committees
1	BAKSA	Cases are jointly dealt with Nalbari JJB	6
2	BONGAIGAON	4	4
3	BARPETA	8	0
4	CACHAR	8	4
5	CHIRANG	0	0
6	DARRANG	1	2
7	DHEMAJI	2	1
8	DHUBRI	0	1
9	DIBRUGARH	6	15
10	DIMA HASAO	0	0
11	GOALPARA	6	4
12	GOLAGHAT	8	3
13	HAILAKANDI	0	0
14	JORHAT	2	4
15	KAMRUP (M)	8	32
16	KAMRUP (R)	Cases are jointly dealt with Kamrup (M) JJB	4
17	KARBI ANGLONG	4	0
18	KARIMGANJ	3	10
19	KOKRAJHAR	4	9
20	LAKHIMPUR	1	5
21	MORIGAON	5	23
22	NAGAON	12	10
23	NALBARI	3	19
24	SONITPUR	6	42
25	SIBSAGAR	1	37
26	TINSUKIA	3	4
27	UDALGURI	1	18