

Child protection In Media & It's Impact



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Child protection issue rarely gets prominence in print and television media. On contrary, whenever a story or report based on this sensitive issue is published or broadcasted there will be considerable impact on readers and viewers. If we compare the print or air space given to the child protection issues, the impact will be many folded and noteworthy. Usually as an agency when we are working on vast canvas like child protection, we will get numerous success stories from the field. Out of them very few stories will get media prominence. But those very few will make huge differences in case of child protection initiatives in particular and child rights promotion initiatives in general. If a story gets prominence in local or state or national dailies or in news channels, that reaches lakhs of people and will have a direct impact on mass. In one hand these news items or stories ring an alarm bell and on the other hand there will be mass awareness. That will lead to sensitization at the grass root level. This multipronged affect will be very useful in tackling social menaces such as child trafficking, child labor, child marriage and school drop outs. Especially when the wave of awareness spreads across through media, seeds of changes will start sprouting at the grass root level. First of all a report or story in the media will create awareness among parents and continued media awareness would make these parents to think about the future of their own children. In the next level parents will come to know about right or wrongs of child protection. Along with that there will be social mobilization against the social menaces. For example, though the child marriage is not completely abandoned in rural India, the percentage is drastically reduced in last few years due to the repeated anti child marriage campaign in media. The same applies to eradication of child labor in the urban part of India. A proper and effectual voice in media will always have long standing impact on minds of common man, law makers and programme/project implementing and law enforcement authorities. Here there are few such important examples from Raichur Taluk, those made headlines and ultimately culminated in brining positive change in last two years. Along with these, more than thousand news reports appeared regularly in print and electronic media. Here we are presenting few important stories which were broken in Raichur Taluk and they created flutters across.



Trafficking and aftermath...

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Along with child labor, child trafficking is a major social menace in Raichur Taluk district. As if it is like a proof to the above statement, a gruesome incident took place in Raichur city. Laxmi, a middle class resident of city was admitted to Land Mark Hospital for delivery. Through caesarean she gave birth to a baby boy. Hospital asked her to pay Rs.21,000 as medical charges. She failed to do so and by giving a reason of 'close medical observation', hospital staff kept the baby and discharged mother alone. Almost for a month they told, baby is in observation. But in due course mother came to know that baby is not there. A friend of mother Laxmi, approached UNICEF supported District Child Protection Project (DCPP) office in Raichur. After studying the case in detail, the case has been locally referred to Police Department. The case has been registered and police took swift action and in a due course the baby has been traced and handed back to his mother. The truth emerged. The baby has been sold to someone else by the hospital staff! Five of The Land Mark Hospital staff involved in the suspected to be baby selling racket have been arrested and hospital ceased. This story got prominence in all major news papers including English national daily *The Hindu* (17th July, 2010) in the state. Giving lot of prominence television news channels ran this story repeatedly.



Impact: Immediately after the story broke in the media, The Land Mark hospital license has been cancelled and later it has been sealed and closed. With this incident people started talking about the child trafficking in Raichur. This incident raised the alarm in the rural area and parents become very cautious about their infants and children. Almost all private hospitals in the city became cautious when dealing with the infants and their protection. After getting information about the role of DCPO in the above incident, people across the district started interacting with the project office whenever they came across missing or trafficking cases. In some cases they approached DCPP office directly and in some other cases indirectly. With this incident and subsequent huge media coverage a wave of awareness invaded Raichur. Especially the coverage in major Kannada newspapers *Prajavani*, *Kannada Prabha* and *Vijaya Karnataka* made it sure that culprit's has to be tried under the law of land. The most popular news channel *TV9* gave a lot of airspace to this incident and that lead in to the mass awareness in grass root level about the importance of child protection and the hurdles in it. The coverage in national newspaper like *The Hindu* made it sure that the issue has been noticed by the law makers and administrators.

From street to school



During August 2010 the DCPD office in Raichur got number of calls about many begging children in and around city railway station. There used to be more than twenty children from Bingeru community from Nelahal village begging in front of railway station. Bingeru community was also called 'Hagalu Veshadhavaru' or 'Sudugadu Siddaru' and they were traditional begging community. Usually the members of this community will put different types of costumes depicting different Hindu God or Goddess and they beg for their livelihood. In this particular case the drop out children of this community from Nelahala village used to beg regularly near Raichur railway station. While in the beginning the DCPD team contacted local Gram Panchayath (GP) and School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) and convinced the members. Then GP and SDMC members along with DCPD team convened parents meeting in the village. They have been convinced by the village leaders and with the help of DCPD project 21 drop out children have been identified and they have brought back into the school. This effort caught huge media attention. *The Hindu* (13th August, 2010) and all major newspapers like *Prajavani*, *Kannada Prabha*, *Vijaya Karnataka* and *Deccan Herald* carried news items. *TV9* and *Suvarna 24/7* news channels also gave required coverage impacting the people positively.



Impact: After this success DCPD project office started getting lots of phone calls about drop out children. After reading the news item in newspapers people from rural area started taking the help of the DCPD to solve the drop out issue in their villages and the awareness is spreading slowly in the grass root. Particularly this issue started a chain reaction in case of media coverage. Following *The Hindu*, other daily newspapers have also started focusing on child protection issues. There has been continuous coverage of child protection issues including drop out and child labor issues after this news got highlighted. Overall both print and television media in Raichur started giving more importance to child protection issues by ensuring required coverage on child rights issues regularly.

Cotton field to classroom

In case of Raichur district around 75% child labors are working agricultural sector. Especially in cotton fields these young hands work for more than 45 hours in a week. Keeping this in mind with the help of Labor and Police department, DCPD has facilitated raids in 8 villages during August, 2010. More than 93 under 14 year child labourers were rescued and sent back to school. The raid took place from 11th to 13th August, 2010. Under the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, notice has been served to 31 landlords in Raichur Taluk. Including all major local, state newspapers like *Prajavani*, *Kannada Prabha*, *Vijaya Karnataka*, *Deccan Herald* and *The Hindu* (26th August, 2010) prominently carried this news item. They gave importance to both raid and legal notices served to the landlords.

THE HINDU • THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2010

UNICEF rehabilitates 93 child labourers from Raichur taluk

Staff Correspondent

RAICHUR: The UNICEF's Children Protection Project has rescued and rehabilitated 93 school dropouts engaged as agricultural labourers on cotton fields.

The children, most of them girls, are from families practising agriculture in villages of Raichur taluk.

UNICEF had conducted a weeklong survey in Raichur taluk during the first week of this month. While going through complaints of child exploitation by landowners in the district, it found that girls below the age of 14 had been engaged as child labourers in 86 cotton fields.

Upon verification, the district administration asked the organisation to conduct raids on these fields.

UNICEF, in cooperation with officials of the Labour and Police departments, conducted the raids between August 11 and 13 in villages including Matamari, Bijjanagara, L.K. Doddi, Yeragera, Mittimalkapur, Jambaldinni and Midagaladinni.

It liaised with the Education Department to send the rescued children to schools.

Pressure

Initially, UNICEF came under pressure from the raitha sanghas and influential persons in the villages not to register cases against landowners for using child labourers in their fields.

But, for the first time in the district, UNICEF officials



A NEW LIFE: Young girls who were working in a field at L.K. Doddi village of Raichur taluk were rescued by UNICEF.

- They were rescued after raids on cotton fields between August 11 and 13
- Notices served on 31 landowners for violating Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act

have managed to serve notices to 31 land owners, in coordination with the Labour Department. The landowners have been called to appear before the Labour Officer for an explanation for engaging children in agriculture fields, in violation of the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986.

Pilot project

UNICEF has been engaged in implementing a pilot pro-

ject to eradicate child labour in Raichur taluk. It found that the parents had also encouraged their children to keep away from schools and work in the fields.

The organisation held interactions with the parents to convince them education was important and all boys and girls should compulsorily study up to Standard 10.

Speaking to *The Hindu* on Wednesday, project coordinator Raghavendra Bhat said

the exploitation of children below the age of 14 was punishable under the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986, the Right to Education Act, 2009, and the Minimum Wage Act, 1989.

Yet, engaging children younger than 14 in industry, as domestic help and in agricultural fields was rampant in Raichur, Manvi and Sindhanur taluks of the district, he said.

Mr. Bhat said that UNICEF had so far been able to constitute 12 'Balika Sanghas' to bring awareness among young girls about the need for education. It was also conducting vocational training for school dropouts.



Impact: Due to extensive coverage in media people started talking about the child labor issue in the Taluk. The news spread all over the district and many landowners realized the legal implication in employing children in their field for various purposes. Especially the news of legal notices issued to 31 land owners sent a clear cut message across the agrarian sector in the district. Following that. All 31 land owners signed on a bond, saying, 'we will never appoint child labors in our farm or field' and as a chain reaction even this issues has been published in the news papers. After this news broke the discussion about child labor and child protection has been started at GP level in a serious note. On the other hand media people started writing about the child labor issue in vigorous way. Post this incident Journalists started building a permanent rapport with DCPD and they started understanding magnanimity of this issue. Once they took serious note, the coverage about child protection increased in manifolds.

The impact of Issue based Journalism

Leading Kannada daily **Kannada Prabha** (30th November, 2010) carried an all editions comprehensive story on child labor problem in Raichur Taluk. Especially in the border villages of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, migration and child labor problem is an alarming issue. During cotton season, thousands of children work in a hazardous condition. Usually for 3-4 months children drop out of school and work in the cotton field on daily wage basis. Each kid will get Rs.90 to Rs.150 daily wage. In some instances agents will traffic children's from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and those children will work in cotton fields of Raichur. A coverage on the issue in **Kannada Prabha** could draw attention of its readers from different spectrum with tremendous responses as post publication effect.



Impact: State Labor Commission read this story in **Kannada Prabha** and immediately ordered for 5 days surprise raids per month in Raichur District during cotton season. Now the district labor department is conducting regular raids in the rural areas. Five days in a month labor inspectors will go for surprised raid and landlords are feeling the heat. Due to the regular raids, slowly the awareness is dipping in to the rural areas of the district. In a phased manner the menace of child labor is reducing across the district. In media also this story created flutters and lead to chain of reaction. Journalists from both print and electronic media started focusing on child protection issue in holistic way. Now days when ever a raid takes place and whenever law enforcing authorities manage to catch hold of child exploiters and release child laborers from their clutches there will be a complete coverage in media. Due to this persisting coverage the awareness is spreading rapidly even in the remote villages of Raichur district.



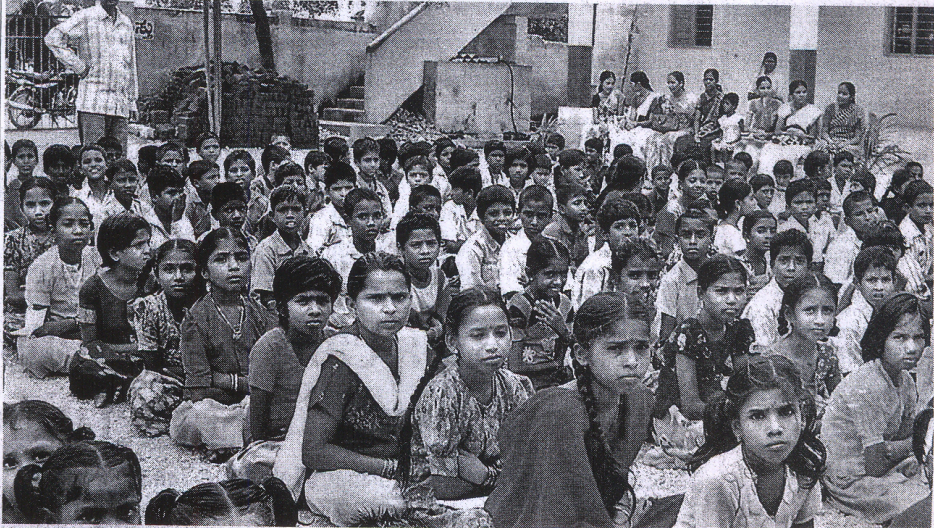
Every day is enrolment day

During the child rights month in November 2010, DCPD organized a mass movement to bring back the drop out children to schools in Raichur Taluk. In that month long exercise, with the help of Department of Public Instruction a door to door survey has been conducted. During this survey 402 drop out children has been identified in Raichur Taluk. Out of them 200 children were used to work in agriculture fields as child labourers. After the identification, with the help of local bodies and parents all of them have been enrolled back in to their respective schools. Their parents have been educated and convinced so that they will constantly monitor the attendance of their children. This sincere approach and attempt have reduced the number of drop outs in Raichur Taluk.

HYDERABAD
THE HINDU • THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2010

It's back to school for 400 children

UNICEF project identifies dropouts in Raichur taluk, gets them readmitted



FRESH START: A group of children who were readmitted to a school at Singanodi village in Raichur taluk.

Staff Correspondent

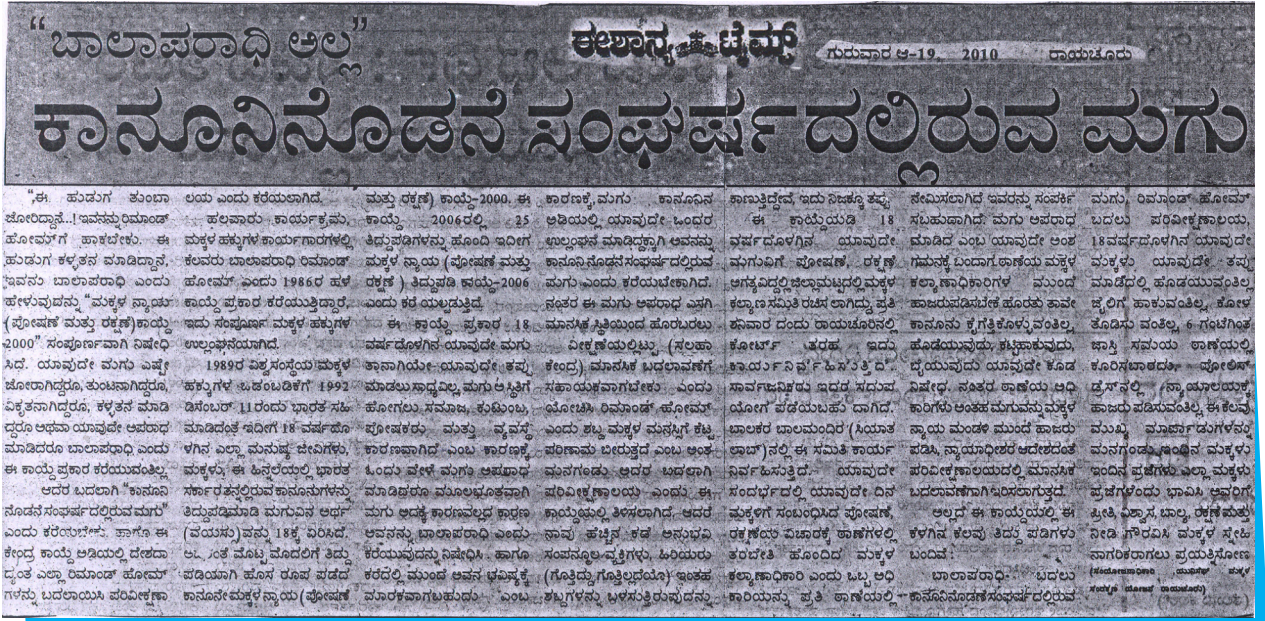
RAICHUR: Over 400 children below the age of 14, who were not in school for a variety of reasons, have been readmitted to school in Raichur taluk. The UNICEF Child Protection Project here observed November as Child Rights Month, and conducted a door-to-door survey in all vil-

lages of the taluk to identify children below 14 who were away from school. It identified 402 such children, including 199 boys and 203 girls. Of these, 80 per cent were identified as child labourers working in agricultural fields, in jobs that kept them away from school. Others were school dropouts, often be-

cause of poverty and ignorance among parents on the importance of education. In a surprise raid in the middle of November, UNICEF, in cooperation with officials of the Police, Labour and Education departments had identified over 200 children engaged as labourers in agricultural fields in the taluk. It had registered cases

against all the landowners. Following a month-long drive, UNICEF, working with volunteers, a non-governmental organisation Janachetana Samsthe, teachers, anganwadi workers and the Department of Education in the taluk, managed to readmit all the children identified to schools in their respective villages.

Impact: A month long exercise and its positive impact have been prominently covered in major newspapers like *Prajavani*, *Kannada Prabha*, *Vijaya Karnataka*, *Deccan Herald* and *The Hindu*. This mass awareness and the subsequent media coverage lead into follow up action across the Taluk. Education department officers and school teachers took drop out as a major issue and every day become an enrolment day. In a very serious note they started monitoring the drop out issue. After reading the news the District Judge Nagaraj Kulkarni started praising the efforts of DCPD and Education Department whenever he got a chance. Along with District Judge other senior officers in district level also started noticing the issue. Slowly when ever they got chances all of them are talking about Child Protection issue. Now along with DCPD all the core departments in the district administration are taking active responsibility in child protection mission.



Two prohibited words

The DCPP Coordinator wrote a write up on the Juvenile Justice Act in local Kannada daily 'Eeshanya Times' (19th August, 2010) highlighting the need for all of us to be sensitive while using words that are not child friendly and unacceptable both socially and legally especially dealing with child protection issues. His write up highlighted the legal sanction and international binding on us to replace derogatory words like 'remand home' and 'juvenile delinquent' as 'observation home' and 'children in conflict with law' law respectively. It has been clearly mentioned that, the usage of above two phrases itself is violation of child rights in light of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000/as amended in 2006.



Impact: This write up caught the attention of local legal fraternity. District Judge, Taluk Magistrates and Lawyers started discussing about the prohibition of two phrases, 'remand home' and 'juvenile delinquent' in the Juvenile Justice System and in day to day usage. Within the few days of the publication, the Project Coordinator has been called for a legal seminar at Lingasuguru, and has been requested to enlighten them on the Juvenile Justice Act in detail. Post publication and legal seminar in almost all cases the legal fraternity has started using 'observation home' and 'children in conflict with law' in almost all Juvenile Justice related cases. Slowly local journalists are also got to know about the need for them to be cautious in their writings on children and related issues.