

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

FOR ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR

REPORT OF VISIT TO

JAMUI & PATNA DISTRICTS OF BIHAR, JUNE 2008



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS
Government of India

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Report prepared by:

**SPURTHI REDDY
(Consultant, NCPCR)**

Cover Photo: Girls from the residential Bridge-Course camp in Budikhad village, Jhajha block, Jamui.

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INTRODUCTION

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) wishes to build an understanding of the link between the abolition of child labour and the programme for universal education. Considering the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan's (SSA) efforts in the country to reach out-of-school children who comprise child labour, the NCPCR considers it necessary to understand the dynamics of a child's transition from work to school. The Commission focused on the SSA's work in Bihar because the incidence of child labour is higher, as also are the numbers of children migrating to the far corners of the country, both of which are matters of grave concern.

Bihar has the fourth highest incidence of child labour in the country with over 11 lakh children in the 5-14 age-group engaged in child labour¹. In terms of education too, 495/536 blocks of the state have been characterized as educationally backward with 21 lakh out-of-school children.² Nonetheless Bihar is taking steps to save the childhood of numerous children who are unable to access schools. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is mobilizing communities to send their children to Residential Bridge Course (RBC) Camps as a first step to accessing education³. The Commission proposed to see how such a programme is reaching remote areas and eliciting support from children, parents and community alike.

A fact-finding team from the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, comprising Dr. Shantha Sinha (Chairperson NCPCR), Mr. Venkat Reddy (National Convenor, M V Foundation) and Ms. Spurthi Reddy (Consultant, NCPCR) visited Jamui and Patna districts of Bihar from 1st- 4th June 2008. The visit was aimed at reviewing the process of social mobilization for bringing children to RBCs, and to review the roles played by the community and the education department officials of all levels in this effort. The team visited two RBC camps in Jamui district operated by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Bihar government, and a non-residential bridge course (NRBC) camp in Patna city run by an NGO, and interacted with the children, their parents, panchayat/ward members and local government officials. Meetings were held with the Hon. Chief Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar, the Chief Secretary and Secretaries of the relevant departments.

Presented here is a report of the team's visit, its observations and its recommendations.

¹ Census India 2001

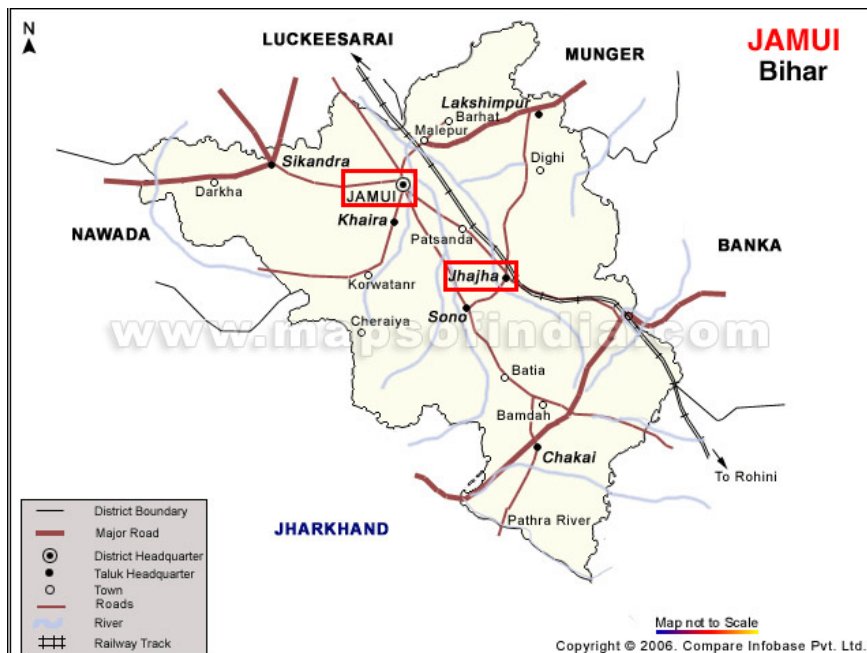
² "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Seventh Joint Review Mission: Bihar State Report", February 2008.
http://www.ssa.nic.in/17pdf%20%20files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20BIHAR_FINAL.pdf

³ 'Bridge-courses' are accelerated learning programmes which impart age appropriate educational skills to out-of-school children in the age-group of 9-14 years.



Map 1: State of Bihar. The Districts of Patna and Jamui are highlighted.

Source: www.censusindia.gov.in



Map 2: Jamui District and Jhajha block

Source: www.mapsofindia.com

OBJECTIVE OF THE VISIT

In its visits around the country to review the situation of child labour, the Commission has often found numerous children from Bihar working in a variety of works such as cotton farming, jewelry making, domestic help, zari-work and many more. That children in hundreds are migrating from one state was cause for the NCPCR to visit the state and review the steps being taken to arrest this migration.

Meanwhile the Commission received information that in the last couple of months over 1200 children in Bihar have been stopped from leaving their homes for work, as they were motivated to seek education through bridge-course camps. According to informal sources, about 400 such children were stopped in Sitamarhi district alone. This success was attributed to the social mobilization measures initiated by the Bihar Education Department, which convinced children, parents and community to send children to the bridge-course camps and repose trust in the government officials to care and protect them.

These parents and communities are some of the poorest in the country. One of the core issues in the transition of children from work to school is considered to be 'poverty'. Jamui presents a situation where some of the most impoverished families have foregone the benefits of their children's work in support of their education, which is being provided by the state. It was important to document this for advocating government support to education.

Next, the SSA-RBC program's approach links the issue of child labour with universal elementary education. By working at the grassroots the government has been successful in reaching all out-of-school children (potential child labour) irrespective of the forms of labour they were engaged in. Such an inclusive approach helps build consensus in the community about the encroachment on children's rights by child labour and spreads the message of education amongst all. This is a precious instance of a 'government-engineered-social-mobilization for education' in one of the most underdeveloped areas of the country.

The Commission chose to visit Jamui because of its inaccessibility, tribal population, and large numbers of out of school children. Moreover Jamui has naxalite presence and the Commission is looking at systems that can protect children's rights in areas affected by civil-unrest. Schools are one of the principal institutions through which children's rights can be protected and propagated, and assume greater significance in unstable situations. If such development programmes can be effectively operationalised by the government in a Naxalite affected district it is possible in any district, irrespective of its inaccessibility, underdevelopment, and status of civil (un)rest. Moreover if it is happening in one state of the country, other states should

also be able to provide assistance to people through implementing developmental programmes and developing social assets.

The Commission considers it important to bring attention to such initiatives in order to stress the crucial need for government support to universal education. The Bihar government's efforts in Jamui presented a prime example which needed to be studied for advocacy with the central government and other state governments as well.

A SILENT MOVEMENT TOWARDS UNIVERSALISATION OF EDUCATION: RESIDENTIAL BRIDGE COURSE CAMPS

The indicators for children in Bihar are quite dismal. The state average of underweight children (under-3 age group) has increased to 58% in NFHS 3, as compared to 54% in NFHS 2 and is 12 points higher than the national average. 'Infant mortality rate' rests at an alarming 62 per 1000 children and anemia affects 87.6% of children (6-35 months age-group) as compared to the national average of 79%.⁴ Further 'census 2001' has recorded the presence of nearly 3 lakh child labourers (age-group of 5-14 years) in Bihar. Of these children, 20% belong to SC/ST categories and 2.5 lakh children are engaged in the rural sector.⁵

The NCPCR team visited two RBC camps in Jhajha block of Jamui district. Jamui is one of the least developed districts in the country with a literacy level of 42.74%, and a sex ratio of 918 women to 1000 men, that is below the state ratio of 921:1000 and the national sex ratio of 933:1000.⁶ As regards children's education, there are over 71000 out-of-school children from a total of 4 lakh children in the 6-14 age-group in Jamui, which means that approximately every sixth child is out-of school.⁷

These are alarming statistics calling for comprehensive strategies to be initiated immediately. There are a total of 32 government RBCs operating in Jamui presently. The two RBC camps we visited were located in *Budhikhada and Shvimandir Baliyadh* villages of Jhajha block. These RBCs had girls from the SC and ST communities, in particular from the Santhal tribes. The gram panchayats⁹ that these 2 villages are part of do not have primary schools in all the villages, have only one middle-school for the entire panchayat, and have no high-school.¹⁰ Infact there is only one high-school for the entire block which is situated near the Jhajha block headquarters. Setting up RBC camps to educate children who in many instances have never been to school, is a monumental challenge that the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan officials have undertaken successfully. The process by which children are motivated to join schools is described below.

Table 1: Number of RBCs in Jamui district having majority girls from a particular community⁸

Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes	Minority	Mixed
18	6	3	2

⁴ National Family Health Survey (NFHS).

⁵ Census India 2001.

⁶ National Family Health Survey (NFHS), Bihar Shiksha Pariyojna Project (<http://www.bspps.org/household/household.htm>) and Census India 2001.

⁷ DISE Survey 2006 and Census 2001.

⁸ Source: District Collectorate, Jamui.

⁹ Gram Panchayat: local government body at the village level.

¹⁰ Primary School has classes upto 5th standard. Middle-school has classes upto 8th standard, and High School has classes upto 12th standard.

Social Mobilization

The SSA officials of Jamui decided to begin by setting up RBC camps for girls. They were assisted by NGOs such as Pratham, M V Foundation and UNICEF. For mobilizing children to enroll in one RBC, they visited all the villages in that gram panchayat. These villages were often inaccessible by road and required the local officials and NGO representatives to trek through many kilometers of jungle and mountains. After arriving in the villages they conducted *choupal*¹¹ and door-to-door meetings to explain the concept of the RBC and encouraged parents and the community to send their children to the three-day motivation-camp. In *Budhikhada* village alone 292 children turned up for the first motivation camp¹².

*“agar hamare liye school
hota, to hum bhi padhne
jaate”*

The motivation camp was set up in the village to convince the parents and the children of the value of education and build confidence of the parents to send their children to the RBC camp. During the motivation camp the teachers identify which children to enroll in the RBC, who can be enrolled in schools, and what other state facilities can be extended to the rest.¹³

Community Support for RBCs

The success of the mobilization effort can be gauged by the fact that nearly 150-200 children participated in every motivation-camp, and all the parents were keen to have their children enrolled in the RBC. Though this was heartening for the SSA officials, considering that each RBC only has a capacity of 50 children, it also presented a dilemma- of having to deny admission. This was resolved by setting up criteria for admittance. They decided to select the older girls in the age-group of 11-14 years because the older girls of 13 and 14 years would lose the eligibility to join RBCs later, and the younger girls could join next year. Further priority was given to children from backward groups. Despite this there were many eligible girls in each village, and to avoid conflict and discord amongst the parents, the officials requested the village community to decide which girl children they would like to send to the RBC. The community was advised to select children based on the above criteria and give preference to orphan girls. In *Shivmandir Baliyadh* camp there were 10 orphan girls. All this builds community support for all children. It was also inspiring to note that married girls are attending these RBC camps with the support of not just their own families but their in-laws as well, which is a rare occurrence. The success of the mobilization campaign and the trust the education department has been able to

¹¹ *Choupal*: central gathering place in a village.

¹² See Box 1 for details on ‘tasks of social mobilisers’

¹³ See Box 2 for details on the ‘motivation camp’.

BOX 1: TASKS OF SOCIAL MOBILISERS*

“Child labourers are spread across the country; working in dispersed villages and slums. The eradication of child labour cannot be done by the labour department alone, as it is so under-staffed. Labour department needs to have a cadre of youth volunteers who can be trained as ‘**Social Mobilisers**’ who will be responsible for withdrawing children from work as well as monitoring school dropouts and children with irregularity of attendance. It is understood that if such children are not tracked they would join the labour force as child labour.” The tasks of the social mobilisers will include the following:

- “Identify and establish contact with child labourers
- Motivate parents not to send their children to work but to school
- Persuade employers to release child labourers
- Organize mobilization programmes at the local levels by organizing street theatre, public meetings and rallies, house-to-house surveys to build up a social norm and a consensus that children must not work.
- Assist local community groups to organize child rights protection committees which can be the watchdogs of various government departments dealing with child labour eradication.
- Liaise with local officials in the education, labour, police and social welfare departments and bring problems and identify solutions.
- Assist locally elected bodies to be vigilant about children’s rights and to monitor and review the prevalence of child labour in their areas.
- Strengthen school education committees (SEC) so that school functioning improves and drop-outs (potential child labourers) are reduced.
- Bring rescued children to transitional educational centres from where they can be mainstreamed into the formal school system.
- Follow up of the regularity of attendance of all school going children and establish processes of reviewing through the gram panchayats.”

The Commission proposed that 5 social mobilisers should be identified in each of the 6202 Blocks in the country. Each person would be responsible for 200 children and it is envisaged that through their activity the status of more than 3 crore children would be monitored. The resources of the Nehru Yuvak Kendras could be garnered for this.

*Source: “Abolition of Child Labour in India - Strategies for the Eleventh Five year Plan”, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, August 2007.

BOX 2: MOTIVATION CAMP

A motivation camp aims at convincing parents about the merits of education, identifying children who will be immediately enrolled in RBCs and most importantly building confidence amongst the parents and community to entrust their child;s well-being and safety to the RBC teachers and managers.

All children in the 11-15 age-group in the gram panchayat and their parents, are invited to attend the motivation camp. Since the district administration of Jamui decided to start a RBC for girls, only girl children were invited to attend these motivation camps. A brief description of the activities of the camp is as follows.

Day 1

This is the first day when all children come to the camp and are engaged in various play activities for the first half of the day. After lunch is served the children are divided into groups according to their age, and a teacher is nominated as the group in-charge. In the afternoon session the children are made to sit together and engage in play and song. The evening brings a collective review session where all children introduce themselves in the assembly and talk about the activities of the day. The next day's activities, such as a children's rally, are also planned. The parents are encouraged to participate in the activities, and visit their children whenever they wish to. Since this is a residential camp, some parents stay overnight as well. A similar incident took place in Budhikhada motivation-camp where a father stayed the first night in the camp, and was so impressed by the security of children in the camp, that he woke up at three in the morning to go back to his village and brought five more girls to the camp the next day. No child is refused entry and children continue to walk into the camp till the last day and.

Day 2

In the morning of the second day the children are dressed and prepared (in a manner of readying for school) and after breakfast they take out a rally, persuade more children to join the camp. Upon returning to the camp, the children sit in their respective groups and collectively indulge in song, dance and play. This ensures that children learn how to sit in one place for a length of time. After lunch and a bit of rest, the group discussions are held. Each group-incharge talks to the children about their life outside school and elicits their individual case-histories. During this discussion some children show greater confidence and enthusiasm to speak and share. Such children are then encouraged to talk to the other introvert children.

Day 3

On this last day all parents are invited to attend the camp. In the presence of the parents, the children first talk about what all they did in the last two days and what they felt about it. Then the parents are asked to speak about: (a) how they have coped without the help of their child's labour; and (b) what they feel their child has achieved after attending this camp. During the course of this discussion, the parents realize that they can cope well-enough without their children working to help the family, and seeing the difference in their children after attending the camp they wish for their children to get an education and a better life.

develop is evident in that there are presently a total of 100 married girls in all RBCs of Jamui.¹⁴ The children were also happy in the RBC and each said that they could bring another 3-4 children to join.

The girls who have joined the RBC are from the most backward sections of the region- Santhal tribals, Musahars, Doms, and Dalit Muslims. State figures show that girls from scheduled castes (SC) community, 23%, form the greatest proportion of children in the RBCs, followed by boys from the same community (20%). Children from the scheduled tribes (ST) community form 22% of the RBC students, and 11% of the children are from minority communities. These children were engaged in varied work such as agricultural labour, cattle-herding, domestic work, *beedi-rolling*, brick-kiln workers, firewood collection, etc with over 69% of the children in RBCs engaged in the first three works. Some communities amongst these are more deprived and under-developed. For example in the Musahar community, the female literacy rate is 3.9% and only 9.8% of the children in the 5-14 age-group attend school.¹⁵ Taking note of this SSA started RBCs specifically enlisting children from such backward communities. In Jamui district 17 RBC camps have specially enrolled children from the Manjhi community and 3 RBCs for minority Muslim community children.

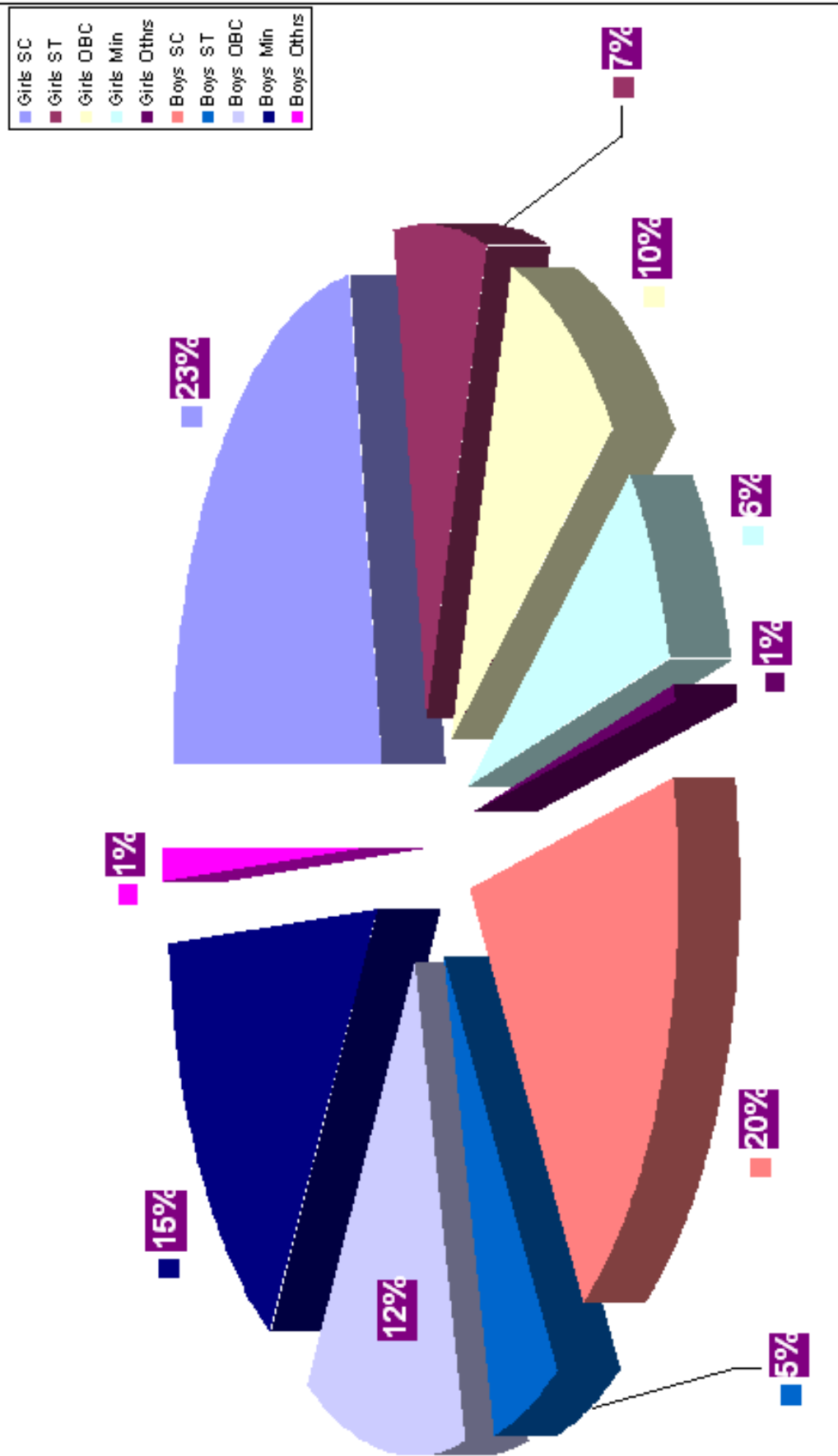
Community involvement in RBCs is also fostered by recruiting teachers from amongst them. Sometimes till the teachers were appointed the educated youth of the village conducted the teaching activities in the camp. In some areas the communities were so motivated that they provided security to the RBC camp, in one instance a man would guard the camp with bows and arrows at night. In others the communities have made all arrangements of residential facilities with fan and solar light, and are awaiting the education department to start the RBC. The local village panchayats have provided water-handpumps, constructed toilets, and installed solar lamps, from the panchayat funds; and the local village community has provided food materials. Other officials have also lent support to the camps from time-to-time. A link has been established with the NPEGEL (National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level) to provide facilities for the girl children in the camps.

The parents of the children in the camps have been at their supporting best. They are happy that their children are getting educated. Before the start of the RBCs most children were working. Enrolling such children in full-time schools meant that adjustments had to be made by the family, especially the adults, to take on the work rendered by the children. Nevertheless when the parents were asked whether they entailed greater hardship, they replied that they do not mind the extra work to help provide their children a better future. Many also said that poverty is not an impediment to education, since the government is providing free schools, textbooks, uniforms and other facilities to assist children's education.

¹⁴ Local education official of Jamui.

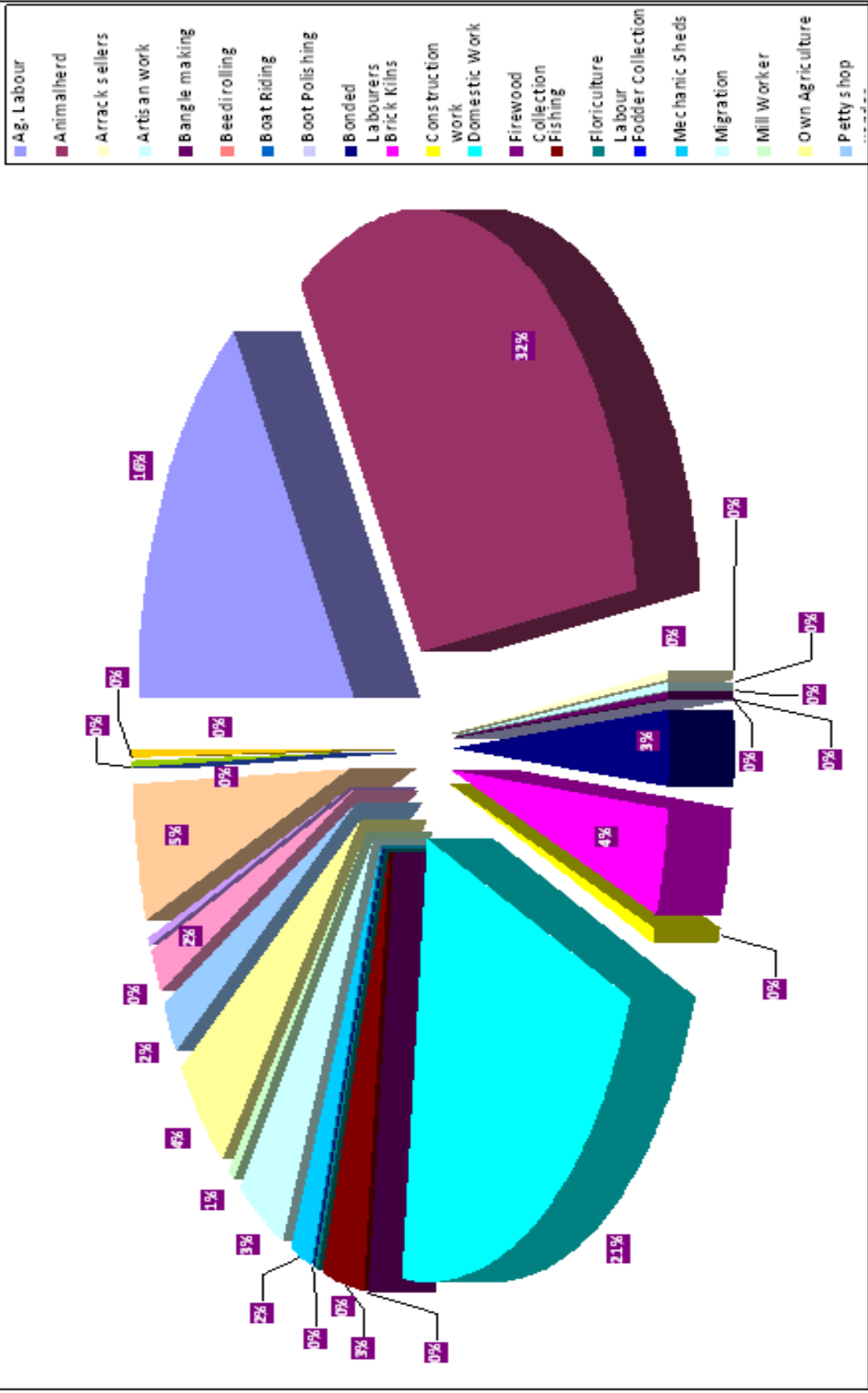
¹⁵ Census 2001

SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE CHILDREN COVERED THROUGH RBCs



Source: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Government of Bihar

WORK PROFILE OF CHILDREN COVERED THROUGH RBCs IN BIHAR



Source: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Government of Bihar

Government Officials and Social Change

The RBCs and schools are engineering a social change in the area. It is not just the parents who are dreaming of a better future for their children but the community and the government as well. An example of this is *Siddheshwari* village of Jhajha block which is comprised of eight clans that were at loggerheads with each other. Concerted efforts of the local officials resulted in the clans setting aside their differences and starting a RBC camp for all their children.

It is pertinent to share another experience of the Commission in this regard. On the day of the visit the Maoist Coordination Centre (MCC) called for a *bandh* and it was not advisable to travel to Budikhada village. However on the persistence of the *mukhiya* (local elected representative) that the entire community looked forward to interacting with NCPDR's team, the team was persuaded to visit and was escorted to the village by them. Though the meeting was scheduled for the morning half, about 250 villagers turned up for the meeting at the RBC camp, in the evening. It showcased the resolve of the community to ensure a better education for all their children, overriding concerns of a naxalite bandh. In such an area too, the education department officials have been successful in mobilizing people for education and they operate without any fear. In this context an education department driver of the neighbouring district of Lakhisarai told us, "*SSA ki jeep kahi bhi jaa sakti hai*" (the SSA jeep can go anywhere)!

BOX 3: A DACOIT'S SHRAMDAAN FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Teka Manjhi is a dreaded dacoit of Jamui district with nearly 40 cases of dacoity registered against him. When some local NGO representatives walked through 15 kilometers of jungle to reach his village, *Soneltarh Sono*, for mobilizing the community to send their children to join RBC camps, their intentions were questioned by Teka Manjhi. Nonetheless, after listening to the purpose of their visit, Teka Manjhi was so inspired that he called a meeting of the entire village and motivated them to send their children to the three-day motivation camp. Thereafter when the villagers realized that there was no proper structure in which to conduct the camp, they built a temporary structure. Teka Manjhi was also part of this *shramdaan* (voluntary physical labour).

This story of Teka Manjhi's *shramdaan* for children's education was narrated to the Commission by the education officials at Jhajha block, NGO workers of Jamui, the State Project Director-SSA Bihar, and the Education Secretary (Bihar). This fascinating story has travelled to the corridors of the Old Secretariat in Patna and has reached the Chief Minister's ears.

Apart from the wonder of it, the profound lesson in this story, as in others documented within this very report, is that every person has the heart to think about children's wellbeing. Through working to guarantee children's right to education, development, care and protection, we also have an opportunity to harmonize society.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE COMMISSION'S VISIT



Photo 1: A student of Shivmandir Baliyadih RBC with her mother.



Photo 2: Dr. Shantha Sinha and Mr. R. Venkat Reddy at the 'public hearing' in Shivmandir Baliyadih RBC.



Photo 3: Participants of the public hearing held at Shivmandir Baliyadih RBC



Photo 4: Release of child rights posters at the Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti Inauguration on 3rd June 2008, in Patna.



Photo 5: Girls rolling *beedis* in Baliyadh village (Jhajha block, Jamui)



Photo 6: Girls at the Budhikhad RBC (Jhajha block, Jamui)

¹⁶ The photographs in this section were taken by Jeevika Chhatwal, Noorjahan Momin, Preeti Prakash and Sneha Chhaterjee. They were the UNICEF (KCCI) Interns hosted at NCPCR in June 2008.



Photo 7: Solar Lamp donated by the Gram Panchayat at RBC Bhandra (Giddhour block, Jamui)



Photo 8: Married girls at the RBC Bhandara (Barhat block, Jamui)

आहार तालिका

	सुबह का नाश्ता	दिन का भोजन	शाम का नाश्ता	रात का भोजन
सोमवार	रोटी, सब्जी	चावल, दाल, सब्जी पापड़	चुड़ा फुड़ा	रोटी सब्जी
मंगलवार	" "	चावल दाल सब्जी	"	रोटी मुजिया / हलवा पुरी
बुधवार	चुड़ा/मुदी अना का सुपनी	" . . .	मुदी दालमौर	रोटी, सब्जी
गुरुवार	रोटी सब्जी	" . . .	" . . .	" "
शुक्रवार	" . . .	" . . .	चुड़ा फुड़ा	" . . .
शनिवार	" "	" . . . पापड़	" "	" "
रविवार	" "	चावल, दाल सब्जी	मुदी दालमौर	" . . .

Photo 9: Meal Chart at RBC Shivmandir Baliyadih (Jhajha block, Jamui)



Photo 10: Mid-day Meal at RBC Dhigra (Lakshimpur block, Jamui)

दैनिक - कार्यक्रम :-		
क्रमसं०	समय :-	गतिविधि :-
1.	पू० 05:30	जागरण
2.	पू० 05:30-पू० 6:30	नित्य-क्रिया
3.	पू० 06:30-पू० 7:15	प्रार्थना, व्यायाम, सफाई
4.	पू० 07:15-पू० 08:00	तैयारी एवं नास्ता
5.	पू० 08:00-पू० 8:30	चेतना-सत्र (प्रार्थना/अभियान गीत, समाचार वाचन, स्वास्थ्य, परीक्षण /
6.	पू० 8:30-पू० 9:30	हिन्दी/उर्दू सीखना-सीखाना /
7.	पू० 9:30-पू० 10:30	गणित सीखना-सीखाना /
8.	पू० 10:30-पू० 11:00	अन्य गतिविधियाँ/कहानी, गीत अंत्याक्ष
8.	पू० 10:30-पू० 11:00	अन्य गतिविधियाँ/कहानी, गीत अंत्याक्ष
9.	पू० 11:00-पू० 12:00	अंग्रेजी सीखना-सीखाना /
10.	पू० 12:00-अप० 1:00	भोजनावकाश
11.	अप० 1:00-अप० 2:00	हिन्दी/उर्दू लेखन सीखना-सीखाना
12.	अप० 2:00-अप० 2:30	गणित सीखना सीखाना /
13.	अप० 2:30-अप० 3:00	अंग्रेजी लेखन सीखना सीखाना
14.	अप० 3:00-अप० 4:00	नस्ता, बनावती एवं पर्यावरण से संबंधित कार्य
15.	अप० 4:00-अप० 5:00	खेल
16.	अप० 5:00-अप० 6:00	सृजनात्मक गतिविधियाँ/पुस्तकालय
17.	अप० 6:00-अप० 7:00	सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियाँ
18.	अप० 7:00-अप० 9:00	रात्रि कार्य स्वाध्याय /
19.	अप० 9:00-अप० 9:30	रात्रि भोजन एवं विश्राम //

Photo 11: Daily Routine Chart at RBC Bhandra (Barhat block, Jamui)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BIHAR

By undertaking exercises of social mobilization the government, in partnership with NGOs, has generated a massive demand for education amongst children and their parents. Therefore the first step is to increase the numbers of RBC camps and enroll all eligible children. The Bihar government is currently operating over 1200 camps with about 70,000 children in the entire state, and is planning to increase the numbers to meet the demand.

Starting RBC camps for girls has generated greater demand not just for more camps for girls, but camps for boys as well. As the mukhiya of *Budhikhada* village put it, ***“jitna dhyan beti par, utna dhyan beta par”*** (whatever concern is shown for the girls, the same concern should be shown towards the boys). The excitement of going to school and learning has been raised amongst all children. There is now a need to pay equal attention to our boy’s education. As one boy woefully put it- ***“agar hamare liye school hota to hum bhi padhne jaate”*** (If there was a school for us, even we would go to study).

Children currently enrolled in RBCs will complete the course in January 2009 and will need to be enrolled in formal schools from the next academic session. Thus the second step is to prepare individual plans for mainstreaming the children into full-time formal schools. This needs to begin now for effective transition next year. The status of welfare hostels assumes importance in the scenario where schools are not available in the children’s villages. In this case children will have to be accommodated in the hostels and enrolled in the nearest government schools. This requires coordination between the department of education and the SC, ST and BC welfare departments so that full benefits can be provided. Hostels must be equipped and capacities enhanced to receive children from RBCs.

The teachers and school administration of all schools where children from RBCs join should be trained to help these children adjust to the school environment. Most of these children are first-generation learners and as such are disadvantaged as compared to other more fortunate children. The parents of first-generation learners

*“Aapko nahin pata ki
hume high school
chahiye?”*

could also be ill-equipped to understand school practices and thus unable to help their children. The teachers should be sensitized to help the parents’ help their children better, thus contributing to an improved quality of education. The social mobilisers can play an important role here by providing assistance to the teachers and monitoring the progress of

these children in school.

Education volunteers need to be identified for every village so that they can keep track of children's continuance in school. Jamui district has appointed *Bal Shiksha Hitaishis* who assist children in their school-work beyond school-hours. An explanation of their role and responsibility will throw important light on the assistance that children require. Each *Bal Shiksha Hitaishi* is responsible for some 15-20 children. This volunteer's work begins at 6 in the morning, when (s)he does a round of the village and wakes up the children. (S)he then ensures that they get neatly dressed for school and gathers them in one place. Then they do some physical exercise and prepare for the day's classes for about an hour. After this (s)he takes them to school. Then again, after school ends, (s)he collects them from school and spends another 2 hours with them and helps them with the day's lessons and homework. This person is paid Rs. 2000 per month by the government. These community education volunteers help children develop skills and knowledge that enhances their school participation. It was reported that other districts too had recruited social mobilisers from among the educated youth in the community. The scope of these '*bal shiksha hitaishis*' should be enlarged to support children from RBCs who have enrolled in schools. They may be given additional training for this.

*"Kothi mein padhna
hain, jhopdi mein
achcha nahi lagta!"*

The RBCs have ignited a desire amongst parents for a complete education for their children. Having started on the path of education, children, their parents and communities are not content to stop half-way. They wish to tread the high-way to complete education but there are many challenges for this to be realized. Firstly, easy access to schools up till the 10th class is not available for all villages. In *Budhikhada* village the high school is situated 25 kilometers away at Jhajha block and there are no regular public transport facilities from the village to the block. In such cases girls are forced to discontinue education. This prompted one old tribal mother to stop the NCPCR team's vehicle and question the lack of high school in her village. When asked why she didn't state this problem in the meeting, she responded, "***aapko nahi pataa hai, ki hame high school chahiye?***" (don't you know that we need a high-school? Should we have to ask for it?). This question eloquently summarises how the right to education has been internalized by the people of Jamui, and how parents will leave no stone unturned to secure their children's education. This is a call to the government to improve access to all schools firstly, by starting more schools, and secondly, by providing safe and reliable transport to access far-off schools.

Infrastructure of both the RBC camps as well as schools needs to be improved. There is no excuse for condemning children to study in hovels with specks of light chancing in and inadequate facilities. As one eight year old we met during the visit to

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Kamlanehru Nagar Basti of Patna said, ***“kothi mein padhna hain, jhopdi mein achcha nahi lagta!”*** (we want to study in a building, we don’t like studying in a hut). Presently the primary school runs from a small tenement. In this basti a very good concrete building, currently being used as a NRBC (Non-Residential Bridge Course), was offered to the local school for usage. However the teachers had rejected such offers. This is a classic case of teachers resisting a move to better facilities as it would enhance the visibility of the school and inturn their performance. After our visit to the Patna slum, we were told that there are a number of un-used government buildings in Patna city which can be used as schools. Coordination between the different departments is required so that the existing facilities can be used efficiently for children’s education. Simultaneously teachers should be supported and their work continually monitored by the department.

Jamui presented an example where the government has placed trust in the last worker and supported them in fulfilling this task of social mobilization. The flexibility and decentralization of decision-making power has played an important role in the success of the programme. The team found the commitment of local officials impressive. It would like to know more about the interventions of the authorities that emowered these officials to take on this arduous task of community mobilization to bring children to RBCs.

INSIGHTS FOR NATIONAL POLICY

There are lessons to be learnt from the Bihar experience for adoption in the entire country. Presented here are three interventions which will further the realization and protection of children's rights in schools and through schools.

Social Mobilization

The role of social mobilization for furthering education cannot be stressed adequately. "If children can be prevented from joining the work-force through the counseling of parents, children and the employers, much of the task of various government departments and ministries would be reduced. It is vital to ensure that children stay at home and go to formal government schools rather than leave home to work full time. Since the prevailing social norm justifies the working of children using the 'poverty argument', sustained social mobilization is required to change this societal norm".¹⁷ This can only be achieved when a person is nominated solely for this task. Further, the government should consider appointing such an education volunteer with the exclusive responsibility of helping children who are making the transition from RBC to formal school.

The SSA-Bihar's success is special because it started with the mobilization of girls and has succeeded in opening over 32 only-girls RBCs in Jamui. It was an astute step of the officials because, had they started by setting up an RBC camp for boys, the demand for RBC camps for girls would never have gained momentum. Moreover because the SSA officials started with the most neglected group of children- girls, that too adolescent girls in the age-group of 12-15, and from the most backward communities- it gave them the confidence to continue this endeavour.

Education Volunteer for Improving Child Participation in Schools

Secondly, the Bihar Government's education volunteer, '*bal shiksha hitaishi*' is improving children's participation in school and retaining them. Apart from engaging the child in positive activities after-school, this also helps keep the child away from any after-school work. Wholesome development of a child can only be achieved if a child is engaged in age-appropriate creative activities the entire day. One cannot consider school participation as the limited set of 5-6 hours that the child spends in the school premises, but the other activities that he/she does which contribute to making the child an active participant in school. This is another reason why children should only study and not work, because work results in a compromise of the child's

¹⁷ "Abolition of Child Labour in India-Strategies for the Eleventh Five year Plan", National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, August 2007. Pg.22.

participation in school. Consequently this may also result in children dropping-out of school due to non-performance and the associated discomfiture.

Government Capability in Protecting Children's Rights

The government is capable of protecting children's rights under all conditions, even of civil or social unrest. Jamui's education programme is a case-in-point for all areas affected by civil unrest where the State has succeeded in providing education to children, protecting their rights through schools and generating awareness in the community. It has also showcased that a synergy between the government and the community would pave the way for protection of children's rights and in the process enable the deepening of democracy as well as harmonize societies.

CONCLUSION

The Commission was pleased to note the efforts being undertaken by the Government of Bihar to educate its children. These efforts are already paying returns. As mentioned earlier at least 1200 children were stopped from migrating out of the State in search of work this year, because they were enrolled in RBCs and schools. Bihar is one of the largest exporters of child labour in the country and such efforts are playing a pioneering role in safeguarding children's rights, not just to education but also care and development, and saving them from exploitative and hazardous work and living conditions.

The RBC camps are spinning a net of hope and confidence in the far-flung districts of India. By bringing education to the door-step of some of the most backward communities of India, the government is equipping children to lead a fulfilling and self-reliant life. As one girl of 13 remarked when asked how she has become so *hoshiyaar* (smart), "***chaar mahine se padh rahe hain, forward nahi banenge!***"¹⁸ This girl had never been to school and might have never stepped out of her village before joining the RBC camp. If an RBC camp can instill such confidence and positive self-appraisal in four months, one can only imagine what full-time formal schooling can achieve.

The 'social mobilization for education' has made the community aware of children's needs and enabled them to protect the rights of their children. This inclusive process provides space for everyone to contribute towards the development of children's rights, and builds a norm within the community of thinking for 'all' its children without favour and discrimination. An inclusive social mobilization process is the only practical solution.

It was heartening to also witness the astuteness, enthusiasm and dedication of the local education department officials in prioritizing the neglected groups of children for enrollment to RBCs (such as girls, older girls in the age-group of 12-15 and children from backward communities), mobilizing parental and community support, drawing support from other departments, and liaising with local NGO members. The government's community education volunteer programme is a unique step of the Bihar SSA that can be adopted by the other State Governments.

In its visits to other states, the Commission has always found children from Bihar comprising the majority of child labour. When the other state governments are pressed to repatriate these children to Bihar, they respond by saying that 'the children always return'. After witnessing the efforts of the Bihar government, the Commission

¹⁸ "We are studying since four months, will we not become forward!"

shall renew pressure on the various State governments to increase their efforts of sending the children back.

This visit to Jamui and Patna was a fruitful one and the Commission hopes that the same tempo of work will be sustained so that all children are brought into the fold of education and out of child labour very soon.

ANNEXURE 1

Programe of the Visit

2 June 2008

Visit to two RBCs in Jhajha block of Jamui district.

3 June 2008

9.00 a.m. – 10.00 a.m. Visit an NRBC camp in Kamalanehru nagar slum of Patna city

10.30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m. Inauguration of Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti at Taramandal,
Patna¹⁹

6.30 p.m. Meeting with the Hon. Chief Minister, Shri. Nitish Kumar

4 June 2008

10.00 a.m. – 12.00 a.m. Meeting with the Chief Secretary and other Secretaries.

12.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Press Meet

¹⁹ See Annexure 2 for report on 'Inaguration of Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti'

ANNEXURE 2

Inauguration of the 'Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti', 3rd June 2008, Taramandal, Patna.

'Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti' (BASS) is an association of teachers, panchayat and ward representatives and NGO workers, which has been formed with the express purpose of safeguarding children's rights in Bihar. Dr. Shantha Sinha inaugurated the Samiti on 3rd June 2008 at Taramandal in Patna city. Other distinguished persons who participated in the meeting were Shri. Ramdev Prasad (Chairperson, Bihar Child Labour Committee), Shri. A. K. Pandey (Programme Officer, SSA, Bihar), and Mr. R. Venkat Reddy (National Convener, M V Foundation). The meeting was attended by over 200 people who have been actively working in eight districts of Bihar, namely, Patna, Sitamarhi, Sheohar, Araria, Kishanganj, Jamui, Vaishali and Rohtas. Smt. Abhalata was chosen as the President of the BASS.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri. Ramdev Prasad said that all out-of-school children should be considered child labour. This is because if children are not attending school for a long period of time, the parents then compel them to work either in their own home, fields or village, or migrate in search of work. He also demanded that all child labour should be regarded as hazardous in nature and urged one and all to work towards total abolition of child labour. He went on to state that poverty cannot be considered as a deterrent to education, because the state is providing free schooling, uniforms, mid-day meals, cycles etc. SSA's success is dependent on rooting out child labour and out-of-school children. Shri. Prasad also called for stricter enforcement of child labour laws and presented a set of demands that the Bal Adhikar Suraksha Samiti can raise.

1. He asked the BASS to request all people's representatives, IAS- IPS officers, teachers, etc to voluntarily declare that they will not use child labour.
2. All political parties should be asked to declare that none of their party members shall use child labour.
3. To strengthen enforcement of child labour law, the names of violators should be publicized so as to act as a deterrent.

Shri. A. K. Pandey shared the government's plan to start RBCs in every block of the state. Smt. Abharani also spoke on the occasion saying that education is a means to social change and the Bihar Government is committed to this goal.

Delivering the inaugural address Dr. Shantha Sinha said that we must recognize that child labour is not due to poverty but that poverty is a result of child labour. Children are cheap forms of labour who are submissive and can be made to work long hours. Using child labour only benefits the employer and not the child. She said that wherever child labour has been eradicated, the wages of adults have appreciated. Citing the example of Rangareddy District of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Sinha stated that

due to the abolishment of child labour in over 1000 villages, the wages of women have tripled. If there is no child labour then adults can earn more and poverty will be reduced. Taking this argument forward she demanded that all poverty alleviation programmes should have a child labour elimination component.

During this and other visits, the Commission has witnessed a massive demand for education amongst the poorest of the poor. The poor believe that through education their children will gain self confidence, will develop and will have 'freedom'. "Education is the way to freedom". Noting the important role that BASS can play, she said that BASS should help parents in their battle for children's education. She said that members of BASS and like organizations/associations are the Commission's partners in realizing children's rights. At the village and community level, children are people with names and faces and not mere statistics. Without this civil society support the government will be unable to fully realize the goal of education for all.

Commending the SSA and state government for its efforts of bringing children to RBC camps she said that if 70000 children are presently enrolled in camps, then this means that 70000 individual plans were made at the ground level. Without this detail of work, it is impossible to bring children to school. She said that this same tempo of work should be sustained for another 5 years if all children have to be brought into the fold of education, and abolish child labour.

Dr. Sinha concluded by saying that it is time to recognize the good work that is being done in the field of education in the state, and that there are many lessons that other states can learn from Bihar.

ANNEXURE 3

Recommendations of NCPCR to Chief Secretary, Bihar

6th June 2008

Dear

On behalf of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, (NCPCR) and its team which included Mr. R. Venkat Reddy and Ms. Spurthi Reddy, I wish to thank the Bihar administration for all the arrangements made during our visit to the State from 1st to 4th June 2008. We would particularly like to thank Mr. R. J. M. Pillai, Chief Secretary, for chairing the meeting of the Secretaries and offering to take immediate steps based on our suggestions.

During our visit to the residential bridge-course camps in Jamui it was heartening to see the enthusiasm of the children in the RBC camp, the support of the parents and the community and, most importantly, the dedication of the local education department officers who have succeeded in convincing the girls and their parents to enroll in the RBC camps. We also visited a non-residential bridge course camp in Kamla Nagar *basti* of Patna. Based on our interaction with the students, parents, local community, elected panchayat representatives, local administration and NGO workers we present the following issues for immediate action. Some of these were also raised in the meeting with the Chief Secretary and other Secretaries, held on 4th June 2008.

Strengthen Bridge-Courses and Schools

1. Increase capacities of RBCs wherever there is demand, with an emphasis to saturate the areas affected by conflict.
2. Begin planning for mainstreaming all children in the RBCs into formal schools.
3. There should be increased integration between the Education Department and the SC/ST and BC/OBC Welfare Departments, for the use of the welfare hostels to accommodate the children who have newly joined schools after completing courses from the RBC. The capacities of these hostels should also be increased.
4. School Infrastructure: Some schools in Patna are reported as having inadequate physical infrastructure such as school buildings. It has been brought to our notice that there are several unutilized buildings belonging to various departments that can be used as schools. We request the Chief Secretary to consider giving an executive order for utilization of all such buildings for school purposes.

Documentation

5. 'Bal Shiksha Hitaishi' –the community education volunteer is a successful strategy in the state. The Education department should document the profile, work and reasons of success of this community education volunteer, for nation-wide dissemination.
6. The Education Department to commission a study to document and analyse the processes by which children are being brought to RBCs and then mainstreamed into schools. The NCPCR can facilitate such a study if the Education department can finance it.

Child Labour

7. The government must strengthen its capacities to receive its own child labour who are repatriated from other states. These children should be immediately enrolled in residential bridge camps so as to reduce the possibility of their re-migration.
8. In Bihar at present the NCLP schools are being operated by NGOs. These should be integrated with government functioning. Also cooperation between the NCLP and SSA must be initiated to achieve universal coverage of all children out of school.
9. Enforcement of the child labour laws should be a priority concern of the NCLP and the Labour Department.

Panchayats and Child Rights Monitoring

10. The panchayats and local administrative bodies should be enabled to monitor children and their status at the gram panchayat level. The Panchayati Raj Ministry, GOI has chosen 34 of Bihar's districts for a direct allocation of Rs. 1 crore, for capacity building measures. These finances can be used for imparting child rights training to the panchayat representatives. Moreover, the NCPCR has prepared a module for training on child rights which can be incorporated in the panchayati raj representatives training schedules. This module shall be sent to you shortly.
11. Under the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) programme two blocks in 5 districts of Bihar will be chosen to equip gram panchayats for protection of children's rights in a systematic fashion. This involves preparing all the gram panchayats in the select blocks to monitor the status of the children in their constituency, protect their rights and strengthen the capacities of all the institutions/departments in delivering of services to children. Further the processes introduced at the level of the gram panchayats

would inform the block/mandal level panchayat as well as the zilla panchayats.

A detailed note on this shall be sent to you shortly. The NPCR shall facilitate this process and depute Mr. Dheer Jhingran and Mr. Venkat Reddy to discuss this initiative in detail with the Government of Bihar. The support of all the relevant departments is requested for this.

Giving every child an access to education up to class ten and investing in providing all that is necessary to make education happen, we feel can ensure a secure freedom for these children and their families and even deepen democracy. We look forward to working with the Bihar Government to further children's rights and seek your support in this endeavour. A detailed report of the Commission's visit shall be sent to you shortly.

With regards

Yours Sincerely

Sd.
Shantha Sinha

To,
Mr. R.J. Mohan Pillai
Chief Secretary
Government of Bihar

C.C. Mr. Anjani Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary (Education).
Mr. Vyas, Secretary (Labour), Government of Bihar.
Mr. Vijay Prakash, Principal Secretary (Social Welfare).
Mr. Deepak Kumar, Secretary (Health).
Mr. Afzal Amanullah, Principal Secretary (Education).
Mr. Pancham Lal, Principal Secretary (Panchayati Raj).
Mr. Vijay Shankar, Principal Secretary (Cabinet Coordination).
Mr. Rajesh Bhushan, SPD-SSA.
District Collector, Jamui
District Collector, Patna

Copy also to:

Mr. R. Venkat Reddy, M.V. Foundation, 201/202, Narayan Apartments,
West Marredpally, Secunderabad-500026 (Andhra Pradesh)

ANNEXURE 4

State-wise Distribution of Working Children according to 1971,1981, 1991 and 2001 Census in the age group 5-14 years

S.No.	Name of the State/UT	1971	1981	1991	2001****
1	Andhra Pradesh	1627492	1951312	1661940	1363339
2	Assam*	239349	**	327598	351416
3	Bihar	1059359	1101764	942245	1117500
4	Gujarat	518061	616913	523585	485530
5	Haryana	137826	194189	109691	253491
6	Himachal Pradesh	71384	99624	56438	107774
7	Jammu & Kashmir	70489	258437	**	175630
8	Karnataka	808719	1131530	976247	822615
9	Kerala	111801	92854	34800	26156
10	Madhya Pradesh	1112319	1698597	1352563	1065259
11	Maharashtra	988357	1557756	1068427	764075
12	Chhattisgarh				364572
13	Manipur	16380	20217	16493	28836
14	Meghalaya	30440	44916	34633	53940
15	Jharkhand				407200
16	Uttaranchal				70183
17	Nagaland	13726	16235	16467	45874
18	Orissa	492477	702293	452394	377594
19	Punjab	232774	216939	142868	177268
20	Rajasthan	587389	819605	774199	1262570
21	Sikkim	15661	8561	5598	16457
22	Tamil Nadu	713305	975055	578889	418801
23	Tripura	17490	24204	16478	21756
24	Uttar Pradesh	1326726	1434675	1410086	1927997
25	West Bengal	511443	605263	711691	857087
26	Andaman & Nicobar Island	572	1309	1265	1960
27	Arunachal Pradesh	17925	17950	12395	18482
28	Chandigarh	1086	1986	1870	3779
29	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3102	3615	4416	4274
30	Delhi	17120	25717	27351	41899
31	Daman and Diu	7391	9378	941	729
32	Goa			4656	4138
33	Lakshadweep	97	56	34	27
34	Mizoram***		6314	16411	26265
35	Pondicherry	3725	3606	2680	1904
	Total	10753985	13640870	11285349	12666377

Note: * 1971 Census figures of Assam includes figures of Mozoram.
 ** Census could not be conducted.
 *** Census figures 1971 in respect of Mozoram included under Assam.
 **** includes marginal workers also.

Source: Ministry of Labour-Government of India

Note: Of the four states with the highest child labour Andhra Pradesh is the only with reducing numbers of child labour. And this has much to do with the efforts of the AP government to bring children to the fold of education through RBCs.

Setting up an RBC in Teka Manjhi's Village²⁰

मंजिल मिले या न मिले इसका गम नहीं,
मंजिल की जुस्तजू में मेरा कारवाँ तो है।

कुछ इसी तरह के उद्देश्यों से अनुप्रेरित हो संकल्प कर्मी कौन तपस्वी की भाँति अपने साधना में रत नित्य नवीन सफलताओं को गले लगाने का आदी हो चुके हैं। अन्तर्मन में श्री ए० के० पाण्डेया, कार्यक्रम पदाधिकारी, बिहार शिक्षा परियोजना परिषद् के उत्साहवर्द्धक बातों को संजोए तथा श्री बी० एन० झा, जिला शिक्षा अधीक्षक—सह—जिला कार्यक्रम समन्वयक, बिहार शिक्षा परियोजना, जमुई के कुशल एवं संवेदनशील अभिभावकत्व का संबल लिये ये साधक कर्त्तव्य के गहन सागर में गोते लगाते और कोई न कोई अमूल्य मोती हाथ में लिए मुस्कुराते ऊपर आ जाते। इन अमूल्य मोतियों को पाने के बाद उन्हें श्री पाण्डेया की यह बात समझ में आती – “go and get it done.” पिछले एक वर्ष से लगातार सफलता के नए आयाम स्थापित करते इन वीर योद्धाओं के माथे पे शिकन की रेखा कुछ देर के लिए उभरी जब इन्होंने बड़ी उम्र की बच्चियों को विद्यालय में ठहराव दिलाने में कोई बड़ी सफलता नहीं पायी। विचार विनिमयन हुआ, चिन्तन हुआ और राज्य स्तर पर एक नई शैली लागू करने का निर्णय हुआ – “आवासीय उत्प्रेरण केन्द्र”। जी हाँ वैसा केन्द्र जहाँ 11 वर्ष से ऊपर के वैसे बच्चे जो शैक्षणिक माहौल से दूर छूट गए हैं, उन्हें पूर्णतः आवासीय व्यवस्था के तहत शिक्षा से जोड़ा जाय।

एक कठिन चुनौती थी यह खासकर बच्चियों के सन्दर्भ में। अपने घर की बेटी कोई केन्द्र पर भेज दे, इसके लिए विश्वास की एक मजबूत आधारशिला अपरिहार्य थी। सामुदायिक सहभागिता और साझी समझ के आधार पर समन्वय तो बिहार शिक्षा परियोजना की पुरानी संस्कृति रही है। इस चुनौतीपूर्ण कार्य में परियोजना कर्मियों ने इसी रामवाण का सहारा लिया तथा एक नए समाज को गढ़ने की प्रक्रिया का आगाज किया।

आवासीय उत्प्रेरण केन्द्र के संचालन हेतु जगह—जगह पर समुदाय के साथ बैठकें की गईं। बैठकों में कई उत्साहवर्द्धक तथ्य उभरकर सामने आए, अपने हिस्से की रोटी काटकर लोगों ने शिक्षा के लिए दान करने का पुरुषार्थ प्रदर्शित किया। झाझा से पटना तक ट्रेन में दतवन बेचने वाली लड़की केन्द्र में रहकर गाने लगी—“शिक्षा के लय ला मशाल हो, चमकी तोहरे झोपड़िया। सोखो खैरा के कई अभिभावकों ने पटना और गुड़गाँव दिल्ली में किसी अमीर के घर में नौकरी कर रही अपनी बच्चियों मंजू, पि०— बरनेट खोड़वा, गीता, पि०— सुखदेव भुल्ला, सरिता,

²⁰ Report prepared by Kartik Jha, Assistant Programme Officer, Bihar Shiksha Pariyojana Parishad.

पि०— स्व० खुराना रविदास को वापस बुलाकर केन्द्र में शिक्षा ग्रहण को डाल दिया। पंजाब में काम कर रही शकुन्तला, पि०—श्री सान्तामादा ने घर आने पर आर० बी० सी० काकन को अपना आशियाना बनाते हुए पंजाब जाने से इन्कार कर दिया। पंचायत प्रतिनिधियों ने सोलर लाईट लगवा दिया। कहते हैं सफलता उत्साहबद्धन की कुंजी है। इसी कुंजी को ले संकल्प का कारवाँ एक दिन उस गाँव में पहुँच गया जहाँ के नाम से जिले में सिहरन होती है। प्रखंड सोनो पंचायत लालीलेवार का यह गाँव सोनैलटांड जिले में मिनी चम्बल के नाम से जाना जाता है। सोनो—चरका पत्थर मुख्य मार्ग से डेढ़ किलोमीटर हटकर यह गाँव प्रखंड मुख्यालय से लगभग 14 किलोमीटर उत्तर पूर्व की ओर अवस्थित है जहाँ जाने के लिए तीन छोटी—छोटी बरसाती नदियों को पार करना पड़ता है। चरकापत्थर पहाड़ियों के इर्द गिर्द बसे इस गाँव में लगभग 40 घर हैं, जिसमें माँझी समुदाय के लगभग 400 लोग अपने जिन्दगी को ढो रहे हैं। विकास की रोशनी दूर—दूर तक दृष्टिगोचर नहीं होती है। वास्तव में इस गाँव को देखने के बाद आदमी एक बार सोचता है – क्या वास्तव में भारत को आजाद हुए छह दशक बीत चुके हैं?



Xkko dk n` ;

Vsdk ek>h dk ?kj

प्रकृति की गोद में बसा अत्याचार और अपराध की एक लम्बी गाथा अपने दामन में समेटे इस गाँव में एक भी घर की बनावट ऐसी नहीं जिसमें आदमी सीधे प्रवेश कर सके। शायद ये घर कह रहे हों—गरीबों के यहाँ आना हो तो सर झुकाकर आना। इस गाँव के बच्चों की शैक्षणिक व्यवस्था हेतु बगल के एक गाँव में विद्यालय है – प्रा० वि० जागीजोर। सामाजिक स्थिति इस प्रकार की है कि गाँव का एक भी बच्चा विद्यालय में उपस्थिति दर्ज नहीं करा पाता था। पूरे गाँव में सर्वाधिक शिक्षित व्यक्ति हैं श्री परिमल माँझी जो दूसरा वर्ग पास किए हुए हैं। सर्वाधिक शिक्षित होने के कारण वे गाँव वाले के बीच मुखिया के नाम से जाने जाते हैं। गाँव के बाहर काली माता का एक मंदिर है, जिसके बगल में बरगद का एक बड़ा सा वृक्ष है। एक सामुदायिक भवन है जो पूरे गाँव का इकलौता भवन है, जिसमें ईट का प्रयोग हुआ हो। दिनांक 28.12.07 को संकल्प प्रखंड कोर दल के सदस्यों इस गाँव की ओर रुख हुआ। बातचीत हुई, पर अन्तर्मन पर

छाया अविश्वास पिघल नहीं पाया। चार बैठकों के बाद अन्त में वह दिन आया 25.04.2008। विशाल बरगल की शीतल छाया तले गाँव वाले को एकत्रित किया गया। सर्वश्री परिमल माँझी, मंटू माँझी, मतलू माँझी, विजो माँझी, दलपति माँझी, कारू माँझी, गोपी माँझी, बनवारी माँझी, सुखदेव माँझी, कपिल माँझी, लाली माँझी, अपूर्ण माँझी आदि को काफी मशक्कत के बाद जमा किया गया। इस गाँव का इतिहास रहा है कि वहाँ जब भी कोई बाहरी व्यक्ति गया है, पुलिस का मुखबिर बनकर गया। इस परिस्थिति में सभी को एक साथ बैठाकर बात करना टेढ़ीखीर थी,, लेकिन कहा जाता है कि अगर उद्देश्य पाक हों तो परिस्थितियाँ अनुकूल हो जाती है। उजड़े हुए विश्वास के साथ लोगों ने बातचीत की। बैठक के दरम्यान एक व्यक्ति अनायास उपस्थित हुआ – कृशकाय शरीर, काले रंग का लिबास, आवास में दृढ़ता। सवाल गूँजा – “ये कौन आदमी है, इसे क्यों गाँव के बारे में सबकुछ बता रहे हो? परिमल माँझी के हस्तक्षेप से वह व्यक्ति भी वहाँ बैठा। परिचय की आवश्यकता नहीं थी—सुना सुनाया नाम था – ‘टेका माँझी’। अपराध की दुनिया का वह नाम जिसके ऊपर पुलिस रिकार्ड के मुताबिक सैकड़ों मुकदमे दर्ज है। पिता झिरखू माँझी तथा माता चन्दा देवी के चार बेटों में एक यह शख्स 1995 ई0 में पुलिस की गिरफ्त में आ गया था। लेकिन शातिर दिमागी इस इन्सान ने 1997 ई0 में जमुई जेल से भागने का दुस्साहस किया तथा तब से फरार की तरह जिन्दगी बसर कर रहा है। यहाँ उल्लेखनीय है कि श्री झिरखू माँझी आज भी जमुई जेल में सजा काट रहा है। पहाड़ों की गुफाओं और जंगलों में रहने वाले इस इन्सान के अन्दर भी ‘इन्सानियत’ नाम की कोई चीज है – इसका एहसास इससे बातचीत के क्रम में हुआ। गुप्त जी की यह पंक्ति – “सहानुभूति चाहिए, महाविभूति है यही” की सार्थकता इसके साक्षात्कार के क्रम में समझ में आई। बच्चों की पढ़ाई की चर्चा हुई तो फिर वही रटा रटाया सा शब्द सामने आया – गरीबी। उपस्थित जनमानस के साथ काफी देर तक तर्क वितर्क होता रहा। हाँ, यहाँ यह बता देना जरूरी है कि बैठक के प्रारंभ में मैंने लोगों को स्पष्ट रूप से बता दिया था कि मैं आपके सारे समस्याओं का समाधान नहीं हूँ। लेकिन सारे समस्याओं के समाधान का तरीका हमलोग मिल बैठकर अवश्य निकाल लेंगे। बातचीत के क्रम में लोगों से यह विमर्श किया गया कि गरीबी क्यों है? सबों ने इस पर अपनी प्रतिक्रिया दी। अधिकांश लोग यही कह रहे थे कि सामन्तवादियों के शोषण के कारण लोग गरीब होते हैं। चर्चा के क्रम में शोषण के तरीके की ओर लोगों का ध्यान खींचा गया और अन्त में उन्हें यह समझाने में सफलता मिली कि हम गरीब इसलिए हैं कि हम अशिक्षित हैं। अगर बच्चे पढ़ लेंगे तो बाहरी दुनिया से साक्षात्कार की समझ उनमें आ जाएगी। यह समझ ही उन्हें समाज की मुख्यधारा से जोड़ेगी, समस्याओं के समाधान के लिए समर्थ बनाएगी। हल्के-फुल्के विरोध के बाद लोगों ने सकारात्मक रुख अपनाया। अविश्वास की इतनी मोटी परत उनके अन्दर प्रतिस्थापित हो चुकी थी, जिसे तोड़ने के लिए कुछ करके दिखाना जरूरी था। गाँव के लोगों के बीच दो नाम बार-बार गूँज रहा था— मुखिया जी एवं सरदार। सरदार के नाम से लोग टेका माँझी को बुलाते थे। बातचीत के क्रम में

बहुत सी बातें उभरी। स्मृतियों के पन्ने उलटते गए, झंझावाती वारदातों की कहानियाँ सुनाई गई, बीच-बीच में माहौल गमगीन हो जाता लेकिन फिर उसे समेटकर वापस मूल बिन्दु पर लाने का सफल प्रयास किया गया। गाँव के लोगों के बीच जब यह प्रस्ताव दिया गया कि गाँव के सभी बच्चियों को रखकर खाने-पीने एवं पढ़ने की व्यवस्था की जाएगी। उपस्थित जनमानस कौतूहल भरी नजरों से इस प्रस्ताव को समझने का प्रयास करने लगा। वहीं बगल में स्थित सामुदायिक भवन को केन्द्र बिन्दु मानकर बातचीत का सिलसिला आगे बढ़ाया गया। लोगों ने प्रश्न भरी निगाह 'सरदार' की ओर डाली। उसने अपने दृढ़ आवाज में कहा – यह तो अच्छी बात है लेकिन इसके बहाने यहाँ पुलिस आएगी। फिर उसे आश्वस्त किया गया कि इस केन्द्र में पुलिस नहीं आती है, पुलिस इस केन्द्र को चलाने में सहयोग करती है। अनिर्णय भरे भावों से लोगों ने सहमति जताई तथा कार्य योजना बनने लगी। लोगों से यह अनुरोध किया गया कि इस सामुदायिक भवन की सफाई करवाई जाय तथा कार्य यथाशीघ्र प्रारंभ किया जाय। आश्चर्य तो तब हुआ जब लोगों के बीच से 'सरदार' उठा तथा उसने मन्दू माँझी को आदेश दिया— कुदाल लाओ और इसे अभी साफ करते हैं। देखते-ही-देखते जन सहयोग का अद्भूत नमूना वहाँ दृष्टिगोचर हो गया। टेका माँझी खुद कुदाल चला रहा था तथा शेष चार युवक मन्दू माँझी, अर्जुन माँझी आदि घास-पास को बगल के गडढ़े में डाल रहे थे। देखते ही देखते सामुदायिक भवन के चारों ओर का परिवेश साफ सुथरा हो गया।

“Well begun is half done.” सफलता का विश्वास दृढ़ हुआ। सिर्फ एक कमरे में बच्चियाँ कैसे रहेंगी और पढ़ेंगी, खाना कहाँ बनेगा। इन समस्याओं पर गाँव वालों से बात चल ही रही थी कि



भीड़ से आवाज आयी— हम लकड़ी और पुआल

की छावनी बना देंगे। जन सहयोग के इस अद्भूत निर्माण को आज भी वहाँ देखा जा सकता है। कैम्प की तिथि निर्धारित की गई तथा बच्चियों की सूची बनाने का कार्य शुरू हुआ। दिनांक 25. 04.08 को उस गाँव के लोगों के बीच उत्सव सा माहौल था। पीढ़ियों से अनपढ़ रहे परिवार में शिक्षा का यह जुनून वास्तव में बदलते परिवेश में दरकती बेड़ियों का लक्षण था।

मोस्ट वांटेड इनामी अपराधी सरगना टेका मांझी ने संभाली कमान

एक अपराधी जगा रहा है शिक्षा का अलख

मनोज कुमार राय, सोनो (बनुई)

बिहार का मिनी चंबल माने जाने वाले सोनेलटांड मुसहरी में इनामी अपराधी सरगना टेका मांझी इन दिनों शिक्षा का अलख जगा रहा है। नक्सल प्रभावित चक्रापरन्धर क्षेत्र की गोट में बसा सोनेलटांड मुसहरी की शायद ही यह है कि लकरीबन दो सी की आबादी वाले इस गाँव के लोगों पर इतने संगीन मुकदमे दर्ज हैं जितनी यहाँ की आबादी भी नहीं। इस गाँव के प्रायः सभी पुरुषों पर आपराधिक मामले दर्ज हैं। तभी तो

- शांति निकेतन बन गया है बिहार का मिनी चंबल
- बनों व गोलियों की आवाज की जगह सुनाई दे रही सस्वती वंदना

यहाँ दिन में पुनब नहीं दिखने। लेकिन पिछले एक सप्ताह में इस गाँव का पूरा परिवेश ही बदल गया है और हथियार की जगह कलम धमा अपनी संतानों को अपराध के उन्ने नहीं जाने देने का मन बना लिया है।



शिक्षा का अलख जगाता टेका मांझी जापटवा

प्रशासनिक दृष्टि से पुलिस को छोड़ यहाँ कोई नहीं खुचता लेकिन निश्चित यह बनने का खौफ है कि जंगल व पहाड़ों में बिते इस चंबल को अब शांतिनिकेतन बनाया जा रहा है। जिसका मसल क्षेत्र कुख्यात टेका मांझी की बात है। इनाम, लूट, अपहरण व ॥ शेष पृष्ठ 15 पर

दैनिक जागरण (17 मई 08)

अपने बच्चों को पढ़ाने के लिए निर्धारित भवन में चूना पुताई का काम कर रहे थे, गाँव के लोग। टेका मांझी के नेतृत्व में मजदूरों का एक दल काम कर रहा था आधी लुंगी और गंजी पहने, माथे

पे हल्की सी पगड़ी बाँधे वह खुद सीढ़ी पर चढ़कर चूना पोत रहा था। दिन भर में पूरे मकान का स्वरूप बदल गया। श्वेत धवल किरणे विखेरता वह मकान मानो कह रहा है अब यह मंदिर बनेगा, इसमें भगवान रहेगें। लेकिन इसके पीछे की दास्तान अत्यंत ही दर्दभरी है। गाँव के लोग दिन में मजदूरी करते थे तो रात में खाते थे। विद्या मंदिर के नाम पर किए गए श्रमदान के कारण उस दिन पूरा गाँव भूखा सोया था। ऐसा प्रतीत हुआ इतनी लंबी अवधि तक शिक्षा से दूर रहने का प्रायश्चित था वह उपवास और प्रायश्चित के बाद तो सारे पाप धुल ही जाते हैं। उस गाँव के लोगों के लिए भी यही हुआ। दिनांक 27.04.08 को आवासीय उत्प्रेरण केन्द्र का 'कैम्प' प्रारंभ हुआ ।



केन्द्र को शुरू करने में गाँव वालों ने अद्भूत सहयोग किया, शुरूआत के दो दिनों तक खाना बनाने के सभी बर्तन गाँव वालों ने अपने-अपने घरों से निकाल कर दिया। गाँव के आबाल बृद्ध नर-नारी दिनभर उस केन्द्र के इर्द-गिर्द जमा होकर कौतूहल भरी नजरों से एक-दूसरे को निहार रहे थे। शिक्षा की मशाल उस गाँव में जल उठी। नन्हीं-नन्हीं जान चहक रही थी-“शिक्षा है अधिकार हमारा, कलम है हथियार हमारा।



गाँव वालों के बीच आर० बी० सी०-आर० बी० सी० शब्द गूँज रहा था, मानो हर आदमी इस बात को जानने वाला हो। सहयोग समिति गाँव वालों के द्वारा बनाई गई थी। जिसके

सदस्य उस केन्द्र की देखभाल करते थे। लेकिन इस प्रयास में पंचायत सचिव श्री रामजी महतों का सहयोग सराहनीय रहा। सहयोग समिति की बैठक में टेका माँझी का हुक्म जारी हुआ था – गाँव का कोई भी व्यक्ति शराब पीकर स्कूल के आसपास नहीं आएगा। अगर कोई आएगा तो उसे हम देख लेगे। दिनांक 29.04.08 को जिला के सदस्यों ने अपनी आँखों से देखा बच्चियाँ खाना खा रही थी, परोसने वाले गाँव के लोग थे, टेका माँझी भी खाना परोस कर खिला रहा था। शायद उसकी अपनी बेटी खुशबू (11 वर्ष) उस कैम्प में पढ़ती है, उसी की प्रतिच्छवि उसे सभी बच्चियों में दिखाई दे रही है। यूनिसेफ की तरफ से मुहैया कराए गए कॉपी, पेंसिल, रबर कटर आदि को वितरित करने की बात आई तो गाँव के लोगों के द्वारा ही इसे वितरित करवाने का निर्णय लिया गया। जब 'सरदार' की बारी आई तो कॉपी बाँटते वक्त उसके आँखों में आँसू थे। पूछने पर वह रो पड़ा और सिर्फ इतना कहा 'सर' आपलोग पहले क्यों नहीं आए ?

शिक्षा के प्रति सामाजिक जुड़ाव एवं सहयोग की इंतहाँ तो तब दृष्टिगोचर हुई जब बन्दूक चलाने वाले हाथों ने अपने लिए कॉपी और पेन्सिल की माँग की। परिणाम भी सामने आ चुका है और अबतक निरक्षर टेका माँझी ने अपना हस्ताक्षर करना सीख लिया। केन्द्र के संचालन में उसके द्वारा निभायी जा रही भूमिका को देखकर वर्षों पहले हुए "हृदय परिवर्तन " की याद आती है, लेकिन यह तो इप्तदा है, इन्तहाँ का इन्तजार पूरी मानव जाति को रहेगा।



संक्षेप में यह कहा जा सकता है कि पावन लक्ष्यों को लेकर शिक्षा के सिपाही अगर समाज में पसीना बहाएंगे तो समाज में खून नहीं बहेगा। प्रयास जारी है, रास्ते पथरीले हैं, मंजिल दूर हैं, लेकिन नजर के सामने जरूर है। सफलता मिलेगीअवश्य मिलेगी।

dkfr'd >kj

सहायक कार्यक्रम पदाधिकारी,
बिहार शिक्षा परियोजना, जमुई

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We acknowledge Ms. Spurthi Reddy, Consultant NCPCR, for writing this report for the Commission.

*“Chaar mahine se padh
rahe hain, **forward**
nahi banenge!”*

- 14 year old student at the
Shivmandir Bakliyadh RBC,
Jamui district.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS
5th Floor Chandralok Building
36 Janpath
New Delhi 110 001
Ph: 011- 2372 4027
www.ncpcr.gov.in