

# **Report on Visit to Melghat Area-Amravati District And Public Hearing Program**

**(Prepared by Apeksha Homeo Society-Amravati)**

Melghat is one of the most remote areas in the Amaravati District of the State of Maharashtra, and is inhabited mostly by the tribal's comprising of the Gond's and Korku tribes.

Even though the country has gained independence from so many years, there has been no sign of development in the region of Melghat. The overall growth of the community residing here seems to have been paused, and one could very well imagine the future of the children's belonging to this region.

In this scenario when the child hood of innumerable children's from this country seems to have been lost, the establishment of National Child Rights Protection Commission has been blissful news for those concerned with Child Rights, moreover the appointment of a person as a Chairperson of the aforesaid Commission, who has a deep knowledge and experience concerning Child Rights was like a sweet feeling of having of sugar in milk. In this circumstances when Dr. Gumble, the Director of Apeksha Homoeo Society requested to Hon'ble Dr. Shantha Sinhaji to kindly visit Melghat region for having a glimpse of the the situation in which the tribal's from Melghat region are living to which the Hon'ble Chairperson readily and generously considered and conveyed her consent to have a visit in the Melghat region. Accordingly on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007, the Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinhaji along with the activists of AHS visited to villages like Bobdo, Khari, Kharya (Tingrya) from the Dharni taluka and also had a Public Hearing program at Amaravati, whose brief report is as follows-

- I) **Date – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007 –**
  - ☐ The Hon'ble Chairperson, Dr. Shantha Sinhaji reached at Amaravati Circuit House at 21.00 p.m on 26/06/07, and was welcomed by Hon'ble District Collector Dr. Purushottom Bhapkar and AHS activist Pravin Desli.
    - After which Dinner followed by rest
  
- II) **Date – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007 –**
  - Since Dharni is situated at a distance of 150 Km's from Amaravati, therefore journey to Dharni was started early in the morning at 07.00 am itself.
  - Breakfast was taken at Semadoha, a center place from Amaravati to Dharni.
  - After reaching Dharni, the journey was further proceeded towards Bobdo village.

## **Bobdo village – Anganwadi visit –**



*Hon'ble Chairperson Dr Shantha Sinha's visit to Anganwadi in Bobdo village*

- Under the Integrated Child Development Project, nutritious food is being supplied to children's in the age group of 0 to 6 yrs, pregnant women's and feeding mothers.
- A visit to Bobdo village was paid
- Bobdo comprises of two Anganwadis Centers out of which one Anganwadi center



- was shifted to in a classroom at Zilla Parishad School
- Two Anganwadi Centers are conducted in two rooms of 10 x 10 fts area
- Total there are 215 children's in these two centers, out of which 119 children's in the age group of 3 to 6 yrs are regular
- After having discussions with the Anganwadi Sevika and Anganwadi

Helper following situation came to notice regarding child rights-



*Discussions with Anganwadi sevika by Dist. Collector and Dr. Shantha Sinha*

- I) Absence of proper sitting arrangement for children's
- II) Non-availability of Drinking water
- III) Absence of Latrine and Bathrooms
- IV) Absence of Nail cutter, water for cleaning hands, mattresses for sitting arrangement, child clothes etc are missing to ensure cleanliness
- V) In all together 9 children's were found to be malnourished, out of which 8 children's were from Grade III, while 1 child was from Grade IV, absence of medicinal facilities in case of sickness of these children's



 Children's from Bobdo Anganwadi

- The responsibility of providing supplementary nutritious diet was given to Self Help Groups, from the month of March 2007, however till date no funds has been disbursed to them. The financial condition of these Self Help Groups is

quite weak and if funds are not made available to them immediately, then the program of supplying nutritious diet to malnourished children's through Anganwadi might be stopped within a week .



*The place used for cooking food in Bobdo Anganwadi*



- In order to get the knowledge of the real situation the Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinha held discussions with the villagers, during the course of discussions the following points came to notice, viz –

 Dr. Shantha Sinha, Dist. Collector Dr Bhapkar and AHS Director Dr. Gumble having discussions with villagers from Bobdo village

- 1) No employment opportunities are available in the village, and even after making application for getting employment under the EGS scheme, the applicant hardly receives employment for a period of 8 to 10 days
- 2) The children's from the village school cannot read and write
- 3) The supplementary nutritious diet served through Anganwadi is not satisfactory
- 4) A Child Rights Protection Committee was established through Apeksha Homoeo Society in the village, which had regularized 6 children's out of total 8 out of school children's from the village.

#### Khari village –

- Immediately after entering the village a group of 10 to 15 children's attracted the attention.



- After seeing the aforesaid children's group, the District Collector along with Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinhaji gathered that group and met them.
- Since the children's were speaking in their native language i.e. Korku language, it was difficult for the Collector and Dr. Shantha Sinhaji to ascertain exactly the nos. of school going children's and out of school children's.

- But soon this barrier of language was solved by an activist from "KOSHISH" network, who having knowledge of Korku translated and thereafter explained the meaning to the concerned guests.
- Some of the children's from Zilla Parishad School and some from Ashramshala had even after reopening of the school had not joined the said school.

*Dr. Shantha Sinhaji, Dr. Bhapkar, Shri Venkatt Reddy, Dr. Ashish Satav and Pravin Desli having discussions with out of school children's*

- It was noticed during the discussions that most of the out of school children's are working children.
- The living standard and poverty was written large on the faces of these innocent children's from Melghat, and at the same time the feelings about consciousness about Child's Rights were also getting prominent.

#### **Tribal Girls Ashramschoool-** (Village Khari)

- After reopening of the school's the girls from the Ashramshala were distributed books and uniforms



*Girls from Khari Ashramschoool*

- Out of total 81 girls only 22 were present

- The Ashram school building comprises of in all together 3 rooms out of which one room is used for keeping articles , another as an office and the last one as school class.
- After having discussions with the Headmaster/Principal of the Ashram school following points came to notice –

1) The Cook and the Kamathi always



remains absent, therefore instead of them one lady and one male has been appointed for preparing meals.

*Discussions with the Headmaster of Khari Ashrams school*



- 2) The cook and the Kamathi comes once in a fortnight and put their signatures and withdraws salary for the whole month
- 3) The Cook and the Kamathi are paid Rs 1000/- per month
- 4) The most interesting part was that even though it was an Girls Ashram school, not a single lady teacher or Supritendent was appointed.
- 5) A mother of a boy, (who had failed in 7<sup>th</sup> class exams) was much desperate to admit her child in school, but since he failed in the examination it had become difficult for him to take admission, In this circumstances due to Dr. Shantha Sinhaji order the APO agreed to admit the said child, after knowing this the concerned women could not hold her tears



6) After having completed visit of Ashramshala Khari, the Hon'ble Chairperson proceeded towards village Tingrya during which they actually experienced the practice of child labour viz-

*Two small children's working in the field with their parents from Kharya Tingrya village*



- ☐ Vinod Mangal Mavaskar - aged about 9yrs
- ☐ Sunita Mangal Mavaskar - aged about 10 yrs, these both children's were found to be doing work with their parents
- ☐ Dr. Shantha Sinhaji stopped in the middle of the road and had discussions with the children's as well as their parents-
  - 1) The children's were enrolled simply on the attendance roll but in fact they were actually working on the fields
  - 2) Dr. Shantha Sinhaji as well as District Collector Dr.Purushottam Bhapkarji advised the concerned parents to continue the education of their children's

After entrance into village Tingrya –



*Dr. Purushotom Bhapkar Dist Collector, AHS Director Dr Gum and Dr. Satav having discussions*



- For understanding the situation, the Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinhaji held discussions with District

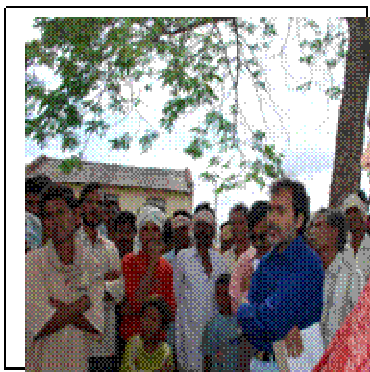


Help Groups have not received funds from last 3 months

*Discussions with Anganwadi sevika from Kharya Tingrya village*



2. Even though the Anganwadi sevika said that meals had been prepared, still the utensils used for the purpose of cooking were dry, leaving an element of suspicion whether the meals were prepared or not.
3. 4 children's were noticed under the grade 3
4. Last year in all together 8 children's died
5. Non availability of Drinking water, Kitchen, Latrine room and Bathroom in the Anganwadi



*Discussions with the villagers from Kharya Tingrya village*

- During the discussions held by the District Collector Dr. Purushottom Bhapkarji and Dr. Shantha Sinhaji with the villagers from the village Kharya, following issues came to notice –

1. Employment opportunities are not available in the village
2. Drinking water is not available in the village
3. Out of total 11 hand pumps from the village, only one hand pump is working which too is situated out of village
4. The women's and children's have to fetch water from outside the village
5. Many representations regarding drinking water has been given to concerned officials however till date no action has been taken.

- After completing visit of village Khari, a "Manthan" meeting was organized at Sub Divisional office at Dharni, whose highlights are as follow's-

*A CRPC member expressing his views during the "MANTHAN" meeting*

1. The villagers and children's from the village raised their questions
2. Absence of Drinking water, stoppage of Tap scheme in Ashram school

3. The Ashramshala does not have wall compound



4. During sickness, the children's do not get immediate medication, and care

5. The Primary Health Centers and sub centers are situated at a far distance due to which the children's do not get proper medical care in time



*Listening to children's grievances during the "MANTHAN" meeting*

6. Absence of medicines in PHC



7. Since there is non availability of employment in the villages, migration has become essential, and for that the family comprising of

children's too needs to be taken along with, which results in loss of education carrier of children's

8. No lady Superintendent has been appointed in Ashram school

9. In Dharni at all important positions only delegated officers are appointed as a result of which they cannot take important decisions

10. The students who have passed 10<sup>th</sup> exams finds it difficult to secure their admission in 11<sup>th</sup> std

11. Non implementation of Tribal schemes

12. In Dharni's Sub District Hospital, absence of Blood bank and the x ray machine too is in operative

- After having listened to all the grievances the Hon'ble Chairperson expressed her views as follows –



*Dr. Shantha Sinhaji expressing her views during the 'MANTHAN' meeting*

1. After having visited the Anganwadi centers I am not satisfied about the



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ons relating to children's. The problems

⇒ *Ganga Jawarkar expressing her views in the "MANTHAN" meeting*

Which the villagers have mentioned are true, but that should be solved through meetings and discussions at taluka and District level as soon as possible. Care should be taken to ensure that the childrens are not deprived of their rights, and in my next visit to this area I should hear that all the problems have been solved and everything is alright. For this purpose they submitted a representation to the Hon'ble Collector and expressed desire that all the problems existing in the region should be solved as soon as possible.

- Hon'ble District Collector expressed his feelings as under –

⇒ *Hon'ble District Collector expressing his views in "MANTHAN" meeting*

1. Today the representation which I have received will be certainly considered because I have seen the situation with my own eyes. I assure you that any problems relating to child shall be given utmost attention and all the problems shall be solved



2. In a period of one year and if the peoples from the community/region agree then we shall observe one day in a month as child rights day where in all problems relating to child shall be solved.



*The comparing of the aforesaid "Manthan" program was done by Shri Devanand Bhakte*



**JAN SUNVAI**  
(Public Hearing)

Date – 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

- Dignitaries present for the occasion –
  1. Hon'ble Dr. Shantha Sinhaji, Chairperson of National Child Rights Protection Commission, New Delhi.
  2. Hon'ble MLA. Shri Bacchu bhau Kadu from Achalpur constituency
  3. Hon'ble Divisional Commissioner Shri Sarkunde
  4. District Collector Dr. Purushottam Bhapkar
  5. Hon'ble ATC Shri Limaye
  6. Hon'ble Sub Divisional Commissioner Shri Kamune
  7. Hon'ble Shri Venkat Reddy (M.V Foundation, Hyderabad)
  8. Hon'ble Director AHS Shri Madhukar Gumble, Gurukunj Mozari
- The program started by offering flower bouquet to Hon'ble Dr. Shantha Sinhaji by Shri Sarkunde Divisional Commissioner, after which all the dignitaries were welcomed by the children's.

*Dr. Shantha Sinhaji being felicitated by Div. Commissioner Shri. Sarkunde*

Dr Gumble from Apeksha Homoeo Society emphasized during the introductory speech that it is high time that the view relating to child should be given due weight age and should be awarded with their rights, moreover the grievous situation relating to child should be admitted and steps for improving the aforesaid situations should be undertaken by the government, administration and the community at large, on priority basis so as ensure the overall development of the children's of the Nation

- After that Shri Pravin Desli, Advocacy Coordinator, Apeksha Homoeo Society expressed his views on the situation of prevailing education system whose excerpts are as follows –
  1. Eventhough the numbers of out of school going children's are high still the administration is not ready to accept those figures. Mr Pravin further pointed out the exact numbers of out of school children's from the four talukas of the region.
  2. The children's big in age are reluctant to regularly attend the school and this fact should be admitted by the administration and at the same time should take concrete steps for preventing this kind of situation.



*Dr. Shantha Sinhaji,  
Div. Commissioner Shri  
Sarkunde, Dist.  
Collector Dr. Bhapkar  
and MLA Bachhubhau  
Kadu could be seen  
during the Public  
Hearing program*

3. The educational capacity (IQ) of these children's have been totally decreased, and for that the government should plan for increasing the educational capacity (IQ) of these children's
  4. The facilities which are lacking in the ashram school should be provided as soon as possible such as food, availability of latrine room's, Bathroom's, Residential facilities, Lady Superintendent etc.
  5. The girl children's should be provided with special care and special diet during monthly menstrual period.
- Dr. Ashish Satav from "MAHAN" expressed his views regarding Health situation in Melghat as under-
    1. The malnutrition rate is very high in this region and nearly 50% of child dies every year
    2. The delivery of pregnant women's are done mostly in the house itself, and this practice is followed in large scale in the community
    3. The siblings are mostly handled by the elder brothers and sisters who do not have sufficient knowledge regarding their illness.
    4. There is no continuity in diet supplied through Anganwadi, and the diet does not comprises of Oil and dal
    5. The Dais who performs delivery at home are not well trained and as such there is every possibility that the life of new born child as well as its mother might be at stake in such circumstances it is very necessary that the Dais should be provided with proper trainings and the Health machinery should be well equipped as well as there should be sufficient storage of medicines.
  - Hon'ble MLA Shri Bachhu bhau Kadu expressed his views as under –

1. When we are talking about the Child rights and even are working for their cause but still there seems to be no change in the conditions of the life of



children's from this region. Friends it is high time now that in order to change this situation the government,

*MLA. Shri Bachhubhau Kadu expressing his views*

administration, NGO's, and MLA's should atleast for a period of one month in a year should reside and do fruitful work in the Melghat region and should strive to solve the problems immediately at the same time. At the same time it should also be noted that the children's belonging to rich families have lost their morals and for this we need a revolution, and to bring this revolution we all should work together, so lets start our work of changing the lives of these childrens from the revolution day!!

- The Deputy Chief Minister of Bal Sansad Rahul Dixit expressed his views as under –



*The Deputy Chief Minister of Child Parliament Rahul Dixit expressing his views*

1. The Deputy Chief Minister first of all expressed his thoughts as to how he became the Deputy chief Minister, he told that he was selected from the Child group from his village for the child parliament after which an election was held for the Child Parliament in which he was selected for the post of Deputy Chief Minister. He further emphasized the work done



by the Child Parliament the prominent among those are that when there was no teacher to teach them then at that time the members of the child Parliament gave a representation to the Project office at Dharni and also sealed the school for non availability of teacher. Not only this they further hired a

taxi and came to PO office and presented a representation there as a result of which within a period of 8 days time their school received a teacher. Due to formation of Child Parliament there is an atmosphere of enthusiasm amongst the children's and they are confident to tackle any kind of situation which might prove to be an obstacle in the way of child rights

- During the course of discussions with lots of people in "Jan Sunvai" program following points came to the forefront –

*Question, being raised, by Shri. Bandy Sane from "KHOJ" during the Public Hearing program*

1. The malnourished children's are in need of immediate medical attention which they are not receiving properly
2. The children's from Chikhaldara and Dharni region does not get education at all and even the education they get is of such a nature which is totally degraded
3. There is lack of food and employment opportunities in the Melghat region therefore the peoples have to migrate to distance places in search of work, and at the same time they take along with them their children's which results in loss of their educational careers
4. The health of this children's is in danger since there is no facility of pure drinking water, Latrine rooms, Bathrooms, etc
5. The government decisions are most of the times ambiguous in nature and due to which regarding their interpretation and implementation there is often a conflict and contradiction with the concerned officers
6. there is a question regarding the number of out of school childrens between the Zilla Parishad authorities and the NGO's
7. Funds have not been released from the government to SHG's for Anganwadis
8. Due to condition of mentioning fathers name while seeking admission in school it becomes difficult for the children's of persons serving imprisonment to have their names enrolled in school
9. The sexual exploitation of girls in schools and Ashramshala should be stopped
10. The VEC meeting are not held regularly, not only that the members even do not know that they are members of VEC committee
11. There is shortage of water and the children's have to fetch water by bunking their classes

12. Even if the NGO's tries to regularize the out of school child/ irregular child then also the authorities from the Zilla Parishad shows hesitancy to enroll these children's in regular schools



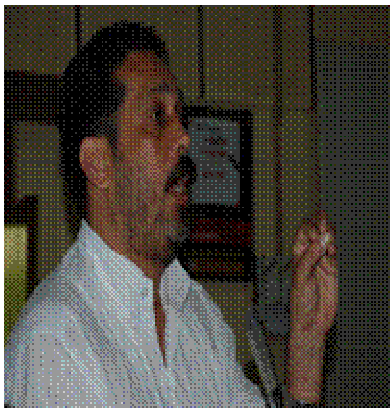
On all the aforesaid questions/issues the government authorities expressed their views as under –

- ☐ Since the out of school children's are bigger in age and their quotient is lower it becomes difficult for the authorities to admit them in regular school, however if the VEC gives a recommendation to that effect that the said child is an out of school child then the administration can act on that recommendation of mobile team has been made, which shall henceforth be well equipped with the storage of all kinds of medicines
- ☐ Funds shall be immediately released to the SHG preparing nutritious diet in the Anganwadis, similarly the children's under the grade III and IV shall be immediately admitted in hospital

1. The Hon'ble Collector while expressing his views emphasized the need to accept the grievous situation prevailing in the region and to find solution upon them after having serious discussions upon them. He further lamented that the government authorities should be well aware about child rights and the questions which has been raise by the villagers regarding children's should be solved as soon as possible and should ensure that every child receives his right.

*Dist. Collector Dr. Bhapkar expressing his views during the Public Hearing*

2. Hon'ble Sunil Limaye the Additional Tribal Commissioner expressed his anguish over the fact that even though there are lots of schemes for the tribal children's still due to improper implementation the scheme's utility becomes waste. If everybody realizes his responsibility then it would certainly help in changing the scenario. The vacant positions of Superintendent and Lady Superintendent shall soon be filled and efforts shall be made for providing separate arrangement to girls for which a plan has been prepared, by which every child future shall be made bright. He further expressed his feelings that if the NGO's and government machinery works together hand in hand then it would certainly help in improving situation of Ashramshala.



*Hon'ble Additional Tribal Commissioner Shri Limaye expressing his views*

3. Hon'ble Divisional Commissioner while expressing his view briefly lamented that, it is our responsibility to make future of the children's bright and for this purpose which ever problems which might come in the way of Child

Development needs to be solved on priority basis and every one should assist in this noble work.

4. Hon'ble Dr. Shantha Sinhaji lamented that, After having visited these two villages and after observing the situation there I feel sad about the pity conditions of the children's there. I have experienced the situations which the villagers and childrens have narrated to me. It is our responsibility that every child should receive his rights and for this purpose whatever assistance is needed from the Commission it will be provided, And as Hon'ble MLA Shri Bacchu bhau Kadu has mentioned that for bringing change in children's life everyone should atleast stay for a period of one month in Melghat region for which I am ready, and I shall stay for a period of 8 Days in a month in this region.



*Hon'ble Chairperson Dr. Shantha Sinhaji expressing her views*

5. The comparing of this program was done by Prof. Subhash Gavai of Bhartiya MahaVidyalaya who was assisted by Shri Pravin Yeotikar and the vote of thanks was done by Shri Naresh Panzade