



Visit to West Bengal: to assess health care facilities and discussion on concept of Child friendly villages & Melas



**Report by:**

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## List of Abbreviations

**NCPCR.....National Commission for Protection of Child Rights**

**SCPCR.....State Commission for Protection of Child Rights**

**WCD.....Women and Child Department**

**CPCR.....Commission for Protection of Child Rights**

**UNICEF.....United Nations Children's Fund**

**CNCP.....Child in need of Care and Protection**

**CCL.....Child in conflict with law**

**CWSN.....Children with Special needs**

**POCSO.....Protection of Children from Sexual Offences**

**DISE.....District Information System for Education**

**STE.....Senior Technical Expert**

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## Introduction

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), was constituted by Government of India, as a statutory body under section 3 of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act ,2005 (No.4 of 2006) for dealing with protection of rights and entitlements of children and related matters.

As per CPCR Act 2005 one of the main functions of the Commission is to inquire into violations of child rights and recommend initiation of proceedings in such cases;

(i) inspect or cause to be inspected any juvenile custodial home, or any other place of residence or institution meant for children, under the control of Central Government or any State Government or any other authority, including any institution run by social organization; where children are detained or lodged for the purpose of treatment, reformation or protection and take up with these authorities for remedial action, if found necessary;

## Brief description of the Visit

The purpose of the visit was to assess the situation of Children in West Bengal State. Also to hold meeting with SCPCR, WCD Department, the District Administration, on the issue of child rights, health status of children. The focus of the visit was on the following:

### **Health Issues:**

- To see whether comprehensive health and nutrition programmes for all children is functioning or not.

### **Child Friendly concept**

- To discuss the concept of Child Friendly Mela with authorities of Shantinekatan.

### **Child Protection Day**

- To participate in Child Protection Day of SCPCR, West Bengal on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

## Team Composition

A team, comprising of the following

- ❖ Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, NCPCR
- ❖ Ms. Shaista Khan, Senior Technical Expert, NCPCR

## Programme Schedule

| Date                        | Travel Plan/Activities   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 8 <sup>th</sup> June, 2016  | Departure from Delhi to Kolkata (by Air)   |
|                             | Meeting with SCPCR,<br>Officials of State Health Departments, WCD, Social Justice and<br>other concerned |
|                             | Meeting with Civil Societies   |
|                             | Night halt at Kolkata  |
|                             |  |
| 9 <sup>th</sup> June 2016   | Participation in Child Protection Day celebration of SCPCR, West<br>Bengal                               |
|                             | Night halt at Kolkata  |
|                             |  |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> June 2016  | Departure to Shantinekatan from Kolkata (by road)  |
|                             | Meeting with Mela authorities at Shantinekatan for Child Friendly<br>Mela                                |
|                             | Departure from Shantinekatan to Kolkata (by road)  |
|                             | Night halt at Malda  |
|                             |  |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> June, 2016 | Departure to Delhi (by Air)  |

## **Meeting with Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Govt of West Bengal**

A meeting with Ms. Roshni Sengupta, Secretary, Dept of Women and Child Development, Govt of West Bengal was held on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2016. Meeting was attended by Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, Child Health, NCPCR, Ms. Shaista K Shah, STE, NCPCR. Meeting was also attended by Director, ICDS and Director, Child Rights and Trafficking.

Concept of Child friendly Aganwadi centres was discussed by Secretary, WCD, West Bengal. Ms. Sengupta informed that in such aganwadi centres there is provision of toy corner/art corner/reading corner etc for children.

Health Status of children and State Action Plan was also discussed in the meeting.

A copy of State Plan of Action for Children (2014-18) prepared by Department of WCD & Social Welfare and copy of Annual Report was given by Secretary, DWCD, West Bengal.

## **Meeting with SCPCR, West Bengal**

A meeting with Shri. Ashokendu Sengupta Chairperson, State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, West Bengal was held in their office in Kolkata. Innovative concept of Child Friendly Villages was discussed with SCPCR. Ms. Rupa Kapoor shared that this will be implemented through a national campaign in 10 selected States and West Bengal is one of them. She further shared that the objective of this program is to provide an environment where a child is recognised as an individual and is respected with dignity, freedom, protection and well being with holistic development. This is an initiative to coordinate and converge Government and civil society's effort to ensure survival, development, protection and participation of a child.

## **Meeting with representatives of Civil Societies**

A meeting with representatives of civil societies working on child rights issues in the state of West Bengal was held on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2016.

Meeting was chaired by Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, Child Health by giving brief on the activities of the Commission. Member gave a brief presentation on the innovative concept of Child Friendly Villages and informed the participants that West Bengal is one of the States for working on this concept.

Meeting was attended by CINI, Save the Children, UNICEF and other civil societies.

## Child Protection Day celebrated by SCPCR, West Bengal



State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, West Bengal with support of the State government celebrated the state's second Child Protection Day on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 at Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata.

This year, the theme of the occasion was “**Stop child labour, start education**”. On this occasion state minister for Women and Child Development and Social Welfare Smt. Shashi Panja inaugurated the programme. She said that the government was working towards ensuring every child his/her rights. In her inaugural speech she also shared that “we are expecting to lend momentum to focused deliberation on child protection issues in West Bengal, bring child protection to the forefront of policy advocacy as well as enhance awareness on the role of the public in protecting the rights of children as per the statutory provisions of the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.”.



A report on secondary data analysis of Women and Children in West Bengal brought out by UNICEF was also released on the occasion. Ms. Roshni Sen, Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) said that these activities will help in bringing a change in the lives of children. She further said that we also want to bring a change in the lives of the children who are the victims of ethnic conflicts and other such circumstances. Ms. Sengupta also stated that beside the implementation of strict punishment against the breaching of the Child Protection Act, the main role has to be played by the common people.

The discussions focused on strengthening the adoption process followed by addressing child marriage, protecting children from labour and trafficking and finally the Right to Education Act, 2009. Taking part on the occasion, hon'ble Justice M.B.Lokur of Supreme Court said there should be a specific target to develop the plight of the children, be it children from street or from other downtrodden section of society.

Ms Stuti Kacker, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) who was among one of the chief guest, stated that children are now a days are exposed to several risks and more and more children are increasing as juveniles in our country. It is important to address this issue of children and take measures to prevent crimes and provide rehabilitation measures. At the end she congratulated SCPCR, West Bengal for organizing a special day on Child Protection.

Highlighting the need for providing education to every child, Asadur Rahman, chief, UNICEF, West Bengal said, "The government is working on providing education to all.



After inaugural address performance by children on the theme was presented during the programme. By skits, drama and dance children expressed the importance of education and preventing children from labour.

## Visit to Child Care Institutions:

### (1) Sukanaya Observation and After Care Home for girls:

A team led by Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, NCPCR along with Sr. Technical Expert visited Sukanaya Observation and After Care Home for girls at Kolkata. Team members inspected the entry register and the following data was obtained:

- 88- CNCP girls
- 1- CCL girl
- 6 -After care
- 5 -CWSN girls



The team interacted with the girls. It was observed that girls from Bangladesh were not able to contact their families as restoration was one of the major concerns.

Only one teacher (DISE) was there in the home for teaching.



## Recommendations

- Child Welfare Committees and Juvenile Justice Board must be strengthened and training of the Members shall be arranged. CWC and JJB are made to reach the Children in need of care and protection and juvenile in conflict with law.
- Process of restoration of the children should be made speedy.
- It was suggested by Member Health to provide sanitary napkins made by organizations like Goonj.
- Girls should be given proper vocational training.
- Mental Health Care unit should be established in the home and regular counseling should be provided to the children.

## Meeting regarding Child Friendly Mela: POUSH Mela

The Commission's focus is to ensure a 'Child friendly Mela' as a pilot at Poush mela, 2016 held at Shantiniketan, Birbhum District, West Bengal in the month of December, 2016.

### About Poush Mela, Shantiniketan:

**Poush Mela** is an annual fair and festival that takes place in Santiniketan, in Birbhum District in the Indian state of West Bengal, marking the harvest season. Commencing on the 7th day of the month of Poush, the fair officially lasts for three days, although vendors may stay until the month-end. Some 1,500 stalls take part in the fair. The number



of tourists pouring in for the three-day fair is around 10,000. Government statistics put the daily inflow of tourists in to Santiniketan at around 3,500 per day.

### Minutes of the Meeting with Mela Committee of Poush Mela, Vishwabharti, Shantiniketan, West Bengal

A meeting with Mela Committee of Poush Mela, Vishwabharti, Shantiniketan was held on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2016 at conference room, Vishwabharti, Shantiniketan. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, NCPCR.

The meeting was attended by the mela committee, members, Police officials, District officials and District Medical authorities.

### **Deliberation held and Recommendations made during the meeting**

- i. Members of the Mela Committee welcomed the Member, NCPCR and other participants followed by an overview of the Poush mela.
- ii. Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member, NCPCR introduced the main objective of the meeting highlighting areas of concern such as child labour, child trafficking, missing children etc.
- iii. Member, NCPCR shared the indicators of Child Friendly Mela with the participants.
- iv. It was shared by the Mela Authorities that till date no incident of missing and trafficking child has been reported during this mela but Child Labour is one of the areas of concern at the time of mela.
- v. Ms. Rupa Kapoor suggested that to avoid engagement of child labours at the mela, an affidavit from the shopkeepers in mela premises with an undertaking and display at the shops to be taken that they will not engage children in any kind of labour at their stalls/shops. This suggestion was well taken by the mela committee members.
- vi. It was further suggested by the Member, NCPCR that one stall on child rights to be kept reserved at the mela, where display on child rights related issues will take place by NCPCR/SCPCR and children will be oriented about their rights.



- vii. Volunteers of NCC from Vishwabharti and Childline workers to be deployed during the mela. NCPCR/SCPCR will help in the training of volunteers. These volunteers will be known as “Shishumitra”.
- viii. It was also suggested that one desk on Child Health and nutrition should be organized by ICDS. DCPO Bolpur, agreed for the same.
- ix. It was suggested that an Adhar Card desk will be set up to help people from economic weaker sections to get adhar card made.
- x. It was suggested by member NCPCR to initiate bar coding or wrist band technique containing detail of the child, to avoid any case of missing child. Mela authorities told that as no case of missing child has been reported and CCTVs are always being installed at entry /exit gates, so bar coding technique is not required. Ms. Rupa Kapoor suggested that a good number of police officials should be deployed at mela premises and AHTU officials in civil dress should also be assigned on duty at the mela. Volunteers will be getting certificate from the Commission.
- xi. Media publicity was also suggested by the member, NCPCR. She suggested that Vishwabharti/mela committee may publish in the media regarding child friendly mela/child labour free mela.
- xii. At the end of the meeting Ms. Rupa Kapoor suggested that audio visual on child protection related issues, legal provisions such as POCSO Act 2012 will be displayed during the mela.
- xiii. To make the mela Child Friendly, authorities were directed to ensure zero tolerance, if any kind of violation to child rights: Parameters outlined were:**
- Prevention of Missing Children, lost and trafficking of children
  - No Child Labour
  - No Child begging
  - No Child sexual abuse
  - Easy signage across mela to indicate: office desk, toilets (disable friendly) etc.

- Posters which will be displayed at the mela, will also be displayed in the schools.
- A mascot will be provided by the ICPS, who will attract children on the issue of Child Rights.
- Volunteers will be given T-Shirts, caps, etc with printed slogans and NCPCR.
- The District Administration will ensure messages are highlighted in audio/visual in the evening, when the mela is operational.
- Issue of eve teasing was highlighted in the meeting. It was suggested that key warning indicating provisions under POCSO Act will be placed to ensure that no such occurrence will take place.
- The child friendly corner of the mela will be displayed at a prominent location, so that children can identify.
- Simple games on child rights will be placed at the Child Rights booths for children to learn and win.
- Helpline numbers to be displayed at various places in the mela premises.
- SCPCR, West Bengal to support in testing of junk food at mela premises.

At the end of the meeting, it was ensured by the mela committee members to take all steps to make this Poush Mela, 2016, a child friendly mela.

Member Ms. Rupa Kapoor thanked all the participants and informed that the Commission will be writing letters to the State Govt and to District Administration to take all the measures for Poush Mela, 2016 as “**Child Friendly Mela**”.

*The next meeting with mela authorities and District authorities has been planned for September, 2016.*

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