

A STUDY ON CHILDREN AT RISK IN MADURAI & DINDIGUL

• Dr. M. Annadurai • A. Devaneyan • Dr. G. Umashankar



St. Joseph's Development Trust
Genguvarpatti



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For



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Foreword

21.10.2010

Dear Readers,

Greetings and prayerful wishes to you from Bro. I. Sebastian fsc, St. Josephs Development trust, Genguvarpatti!

As you know, "St. Joseph's Development Trust", from its very inception, has been a child focused organization which means child centered, child friendly, and respecting children's rights as per UN convention on the rights of children. Our programme in 8 districts covers roughly 5000 children. Among our children focused programmes SJDT is very proud of its interventions with two categories of children.

- a) Care of destitute girl children
- b) And intervention with street and working children along with intervention with children in conflict with law.

The present publication "A Rapid Assessment of Children At Risk in Urban Areas of Dindigul and Madurai" is an outcome of the study conducted on "Children At Risk" in the same area, and a strategic planning process that we undertook recently. I am grateful to Dr. M. Annadurai, Mr. A. Devaneyan and Dr. G. Umashankar who are child rights activists who animated the process. I also wish to record sincere gratitude to all our partner funding agencies for their cooperation.

Yours fraternally in Xt,

Rev. Dr. Bro. I. Sebastian fsc,

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SJDT has been working with street children and working children for the past many years both in Dindigul and Madurai. Based on its experience of working with these children over the years, SJDT has realized that children face violence from everyone at all places, be it home or school or public places. There are more children who are in different risky situation who need special care and attention. Hence, SJDT initiated the study in both the cities.

The study was conducted with the help of the staff and volunteer team of SJDT at Dindigul and Madurai. The study was based on the primary data collected from 200 children who are at risk. Through this study, SJDT is able to understand various factors that force children to be at the risky situation. It also enabled us to understand the problems that they have been facing at present and their needs and expectations from a civil society organization like SJDT. The study also found that there are more than 500 children who are at risk situation. It also shows that SJDT has to intervene in this situation for the protection of these children at risk.

The book is presented in 3 chapters. The first chapter gives an introduction to the issue and background and need for the present study. The second chapter is the analysis and discussion of the collected data. The third chapter presents the major findings and recommendations of the study.

The study report is published in the form of a book and we are thankful for the opportunity given to us by **Rev. Dr. Bro. I. Sebastian fsc**, Executive Director of St. Joseph's Development Trust, Genguvarpatty. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to **Rev. Dr. Bro. I. Sebastian fsc** for without his support and encouragement, this book would not have been possible. We would like to acknowledge the efforts taken by the staff & volunteers team at Madurai and Dindigul for their cooperation and support in collecting the data.

Dr. M. Annadurai

A. Devaneyan

Dr. G. Uma Shankar



I. INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale:

As stated in the National Policy for Children (NPC) 1974, children are prime asset of our country. While children constitute more than 40 per cent of India's population, they are also one of the most vulnerable sections of the society. Crime statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau reveals that child rapes went up by a whopping 13.7% in 2005, while crimes against children went up by 3.8%. And that's just those on record.

Despite its ethos of non-violence and spirituality, India hosts the world's largest number of children subjected to violence. Violence against children in India is found at home within families, streets, schools, juvenile homes, orphanages. India still has a high infant mortality of 63 per every 1000 children born. 47% of children suffer malnutrition. The child sex ratio

reveals dangerous trends in gender disparity. The number of girls for every thousand boys has fallen from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001.

Officially 26% of the population lives below the poverty line. However, it is estimated at least 40% of the population lived with less than a dollar per day. Children of these communities are constant victims of violation of their rights, be it survival, protection or development. Child marriage, violence against children especially girl children, vulnerability due to migration, displacement, natural and man made disasters have already registered an increase at least in reported cases. Women, children and youth are more vulnerable to such situations within the given socio-cultural context. As 72% of Indian population still lives in villages and rural India, which is in the grip of an agrarian crisis, the children in this sector are the most neglected.

While there are regions where more than 15% of children are child labourers, there are also areas where only less than 3% are working. Independent estimates of child labour put the figures as high as 44 million to 110 million. 14% of children between 5-14 years are involved in child labour. (State of World's Children, 2005, UNICEF). In 2001, the ILO estimated that 11.6 percent of children aged 10 to 14 years in India were working. (The US Dept. of Labor's Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour). An estimated 535,102,000 would be economically active in 2010. Of them 8,454,000 would be children in the age group 10-14 yrs accounting for 7.5% of children in that age group. (ILO, Bureau of Statistics, Economically active population). Generally speaking children of this section live in total deprivation, suffering from malnutrition, economic exploitation, neglect and abuse. A significant percentage of children belonging to the 'above poverty level' groups actually live at subsistence level. These children too do not have resources to realize their rights.

Most of these are also engaged in some kind of labour or self-employment. Trafficking in children for various purposes - child marriage, child sexual abuse and other forms of cruel violations are common in the country. According to an International Labor Organization (ILO) estimate, 15 percent of the country's estimated 2.3 million prostitutes were children, while the U.N. reported that an estimated 40 percent were below 18 years of age. 77% of the migrant populations numbering 220 million people are women and children. These children are at much greater risk than others. In the absence of family and community support, their education, health, personal security and development opportunities are disrupted. They are vulnerable to trafficking, sexual abuse, physical violence, drugs and criminal gangs and economic exploitation.

The WHO estimates that 40 million Indian children below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect. As per UNICEF report on a nationwide survey, 64% of Indian mothers told interviewers that they had hit their children with knuckles or an object of some sort within the last six months. Some of the most prevalent forms of violence against children in India are corporal punishment, sexual abuse and denial of rights on the basis of caste. According to the National Commission for protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), 65% of the school going children have been subjected to various forms of corporal punishments. According to UNICEF 53% of the children in India are subjected to sexual abuse. In addition to these, children in India experience denial of access to essential services, exploitation because they are born into 'low castes' otherwise called 'Dalits' i.e., socially and economically marginalized, excluded communities. In fact there is no specific national or state law that prohibits violence against children, (outside the juvenile justice system) in consonance with the standards set by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Children are the most vulnerable section is evident from the continued large scale prevalence of street children, trafficked children, abused children, abandoned children, destitute children, orphaned children, mentally ill children, missing children, children affected by conflict and disasters, working children, differently abled children, children living with HIV/AIDS and others. Therefore, realizing their rights especially to protection continues to be a distant dream for millions of children in India.

Children are at risk cutting across boundaries of geography, race, class and culture. It occurs in homes, schools and streets; in places of work and entertainment, and in care and detention centres. Perpetrators include parents, family members, teachers, caretakers and law enforcement authorities. Some children are particularly at risk because of gender, caste, religion, race, ethnic origin, disability, etc.

The consequences can be overwhelming. It sometimes can be a matter of life and death at a tender age. But even children who survive have to deal with awful and horrendous psychological and emotional trauma and problems. It also hinders their ability to learn and grow into responsible adults who can create peaceful families and communities.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) forms the very basis for ensuring the rights of children and especially for the protection of children. The ramifications of the violence would continue throughout their lives, influencing their development, behaviour and health.

Children at risk is thus a major threat to the development of the nation and in our quest to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). We would not be able to achieve universal primary education unless and

until all children are safe and in a child friendly environment. A child at risk will lead to gender inequality.

We can not give any kind of justification for keeping / allowing children to be at risk. Also, it is not an unavoidable situation. If its underlying causes are identified and addressed, it is certainly preventable. This study will help to improve our understanding of the problem, and help us devise strategies to confront it.

Objectives:

The major objectives of this rapid assessment are:

- a. To identify various children at risk in the urban limits of Madurai and Dindigul*
- b. To study the socio economic status of children at risk.*
- c. To assess the core problems that lead the children to be at risk.*
- d. To identify the various problems faced by the children at risk.*
- e. To understand the expectations of the children at risk.*

Methodology:

It was an exploratory study since the issue is new to this area and also it is difficult to get information about children at risk. It seeks to find out different risk situations in which children are there in these two cities, how they get along with the people and the situation, what are the issues that are of concern to them, and what are their needs and expectations from civil society organizations. It tries to learn what is going on with children in various risk situations and to investigate various factors that lead to children to such risky situations. The study is based entirely on primary data.

Thus, the study was carried out using the frameworks of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Primary data was mainly gathered through personal interviews and observations. The questionnaire that was used for conducting this study is given as annexure.

Primary data was collected from 200 children, 100 children each from Madurai and Dindigul districts.

Operational Definition of Children at risk:

Even though many definitions are in operation in different countries, the western concept and context of 'children at risk' are different from that of in India. So, SJDT would like to define 'children at risk' in their context as follows:

A child at risk is one who is at risk of losing their life, losing their ability to learn, develop emotional, behavioral or physical disabilities in the future due to various factors such as family, social, economic, political, cultural, health, etc. They are at high risk because of poverty, abuse, neglect, hunger, disease and exploitation.

Study Team:

Dr. M. Annadurai is the Director of SCOPE INDIA, a rights based organization that works for children and other vulnerable sections of the society. He has more than 10 years of experience in working with children for their rights. He has rich research experience in the development field and with children.

A. Devaneyan is the founder Director of Thozhamai, a resource centre for rights. He has more than a decade's experience in the field of human rights and especially child rights. He has been part of research teams in human rights field for many years.

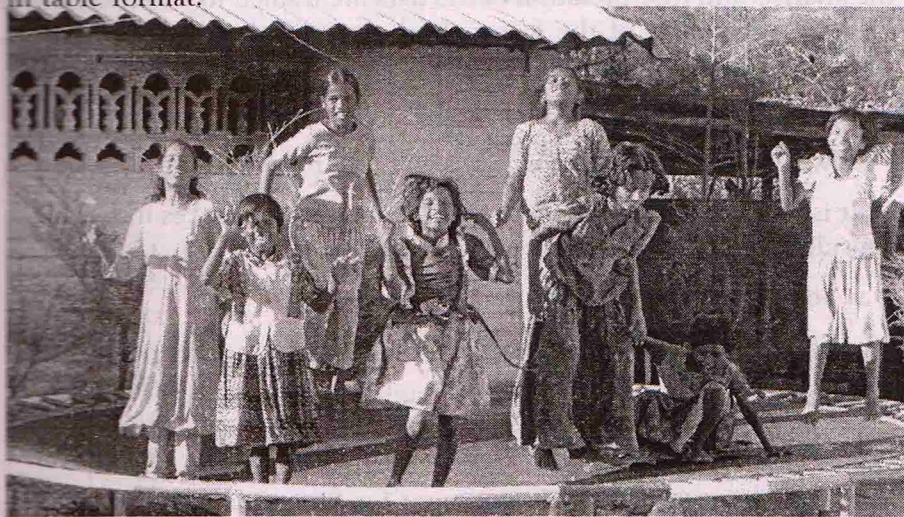
Dr. G. Uma Shankar is a Development Consultant working in Tamil Nadu who has long and vast experience in research. He is specialized in panchayati raj, local governance and rights based approaches.

Scope and coverage:

The above study has been commissioned by St. Joseph's Development Trust (SJDT) in two cities of Madurai and Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. In each of the two selected cities, data was collected from children at risk. Since the study made an attempt to identify various children at risk, no fixed number was fixed. Attempt was made to identify as many children at risk as possible. Geographical area was limited to the current working area of SJDT, that is, urban limits of Madurai and Dindigul. Data was collected from 100 children at risk each from Dindigul and Madurai.

Data Analysis:

The collected data was analyzed using simple averages and presented in table format.





II. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data was analyzed in a method where three important components were taken in to consideration. The components used for the analysis and interpretation of the data are framed in a fashion where there is integration of the factors both contributing and alternatives. The background of analysis is designed on the following;

- a. The factors that contribute to the present risk situation.
- b. Where do these risky situations will lead to in the future?

It is also vital to make a note that the analysis also takes into consideration the other components like

- a. Socio-Economic background
- b. Educational background
- c. Situation analysis
- d. Future course of action and
- e. An assessment of the environment for future planning and action

To have a better understanding which is expected to lead to a situation where the present analysis should lead to an arena which leads to a concrete plan action based on the major findings which are explained separately in the succeeding section. Simple tables with percentage in accordance with the districts were presented with a separate identification of male and female children in all the responses made to the questions. It is also a significant factor that the present method of analysis also helps to arrive at the conclusions both in a total form and also district wise. The differential situation prevailing in the districts can also be arrived in this section which can help to have a plan of action based on the prevailing situations in the respective districts.

The frame work for analysis is presented in the following diagram which enables to have a quick overview of the present analysis and interpretation.

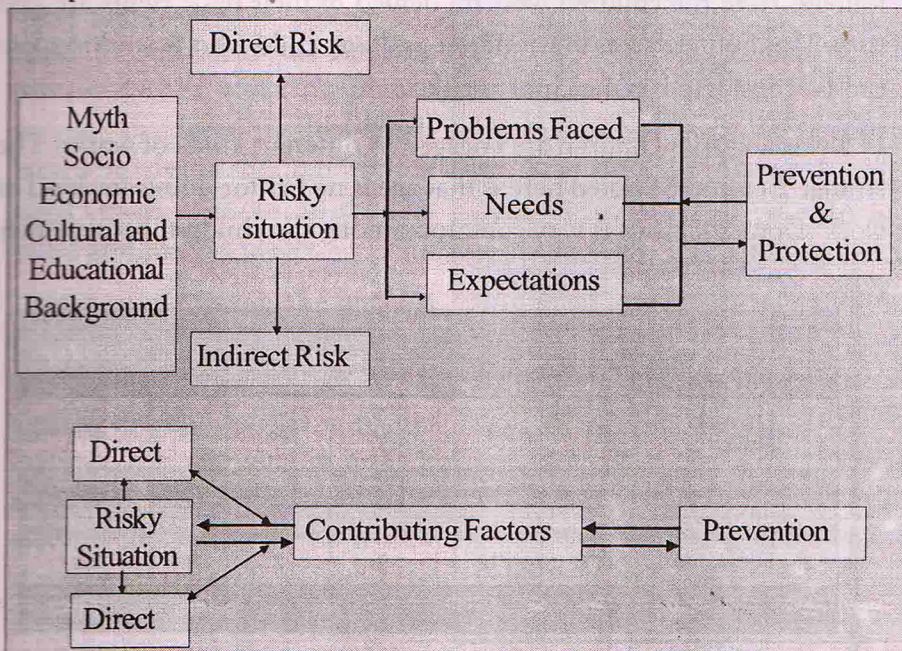


Table No: 1

Nature of Work of the Children at Risk

Any child who is denied of its basic rights is at risk. Whether it does work or not, it is just to be said that it is in a risk situation. Invariably the children either male or female it is in toto can be said as that these children are at risk. Risk can be defined in many ways. But here in this analysis the children who are denied of their basic rights are considered as children at risk. The risks are both direct and indirect as mentioned above. But when the risk situation is taken in to consideration the denial of basic rights is the parameter used and the outcome are presented as follows. Here the children who are denied of their basic rights are said to be children are working children and any child who is working also can be considered as the child at risk.

Invariably, the children are engaged in different kinds of works. The strange factor to be noted here is that age is no bar for doing any kind of work. Domestic work is very common among the children because they

S.No	Nature of Work	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Domestic Work	24	8	10	32	74	37%
2.	Hazardous Work	40	32	10	14	96	48%
3.	Others	10	12	6	2	30	15%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

are non-problematic and reliable. The preference is given for female children. The hazardous work places identified are

- Steel industries
- Workshops
- Leather works
- Soda factory
- Road side shops

Safety of children, long working hours and poor & inadequate wages are the major issues of concern in the working places. Other working places include the locations like small businesses or the children work as salespersons in shops, in the bus stand and market places.

It is evident from the analysis that the children are engaged in non-domestic work which is against the domestic laws of the country. It is also vital to make a note that the children who are working are always at the risk of directly losing their right to education and their right to development.

“

Name: **R. Balu**

Age: **14**

Sex: **Male**

Village: **Kathiryenkulam-I**

Education: **7th Std**

Occupation: **Cow Rearing**

Father's Name: **Ramasamy (Late)**

Mother's Name: **Rajammal (Late)**

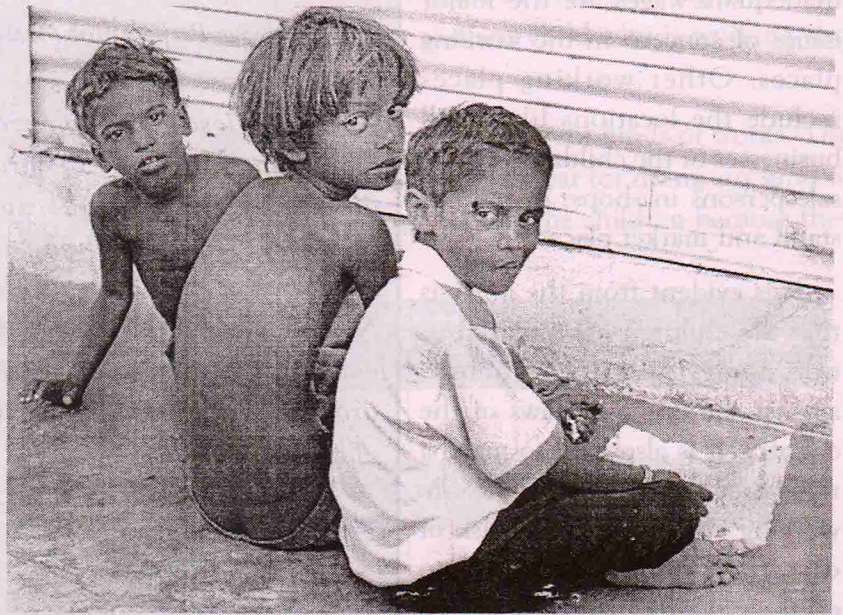
He has lost both the parents many years back due to chronic disease. He is brought up by relatives. They are living in a small hut in Kathirayen Kulam. Now he is under the control of his elder brother who is also a school drop out and working as a driver of a tractor.

”

Table No: 1

Age Group of the Children at Risk

Age is an important factor that helps to assess the status of children. The confusion that surrounds the age of children is one of the main factors for putting children at risk and it is further compounded by defining them differently in various acts. SJDT believes in the UNCRC definition that all those below 18 years of age are considered as children. However, for the present study, children below 14 are taken up as respondents and data were collected from them.



S.No	Age Group	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	0 – 6 years	7	3	3	6	19	9.5%
2.	6 – 12 years	40	46	15	16	107	53.5%
3.	12 – 14 years	27	3	8	26	64	32%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

It is evident from table - 2 that all the 200 children are below the age of 14. It is really a appalling truth that so many children below the age of 14 are still out of schools in just 2 cities. Of the 200 children, 85 per cent of children are in the age group of 6-14 and the remaining 15 per cent are below the age of 5, which is again shocking. It means the future of these children is further at risk.

Madurai, basically being a tourist place, has the most number of children who falls between the age group of 6 years to 12 years and were engaged in tourism related work to earn money as there is every chance that the visitors have a very soft attitude toward children and that they are mostly used.

The UN convention on Rights of Children reads that any one under the age of 18 is a child. According to Right to Education Act, children in the age group of 6-14 are guaranteed their right to education. In spite of these provisions, all the 200 children under this study are denied their right to education and are out of schools. It means that India will be unable to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring all children into primary education system by 2015.

Table No: 3

Nature of Work of the Children at Risk

Sex is one of the important factors used to identify which category of children is at more risk. Analysis of the issue of children at risk on the basis of their sex helps us to find out the special problems faced by girl children. Though all children are same, when it is analysed based on their sex gives a better understanding and clarity of the issue as a whole. On the other hand it helps to assess the number of male and female children who are at risk in the two responding districts.

S.No	Sex	No. of Children		Total	Percentage
		Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Male	74	52	126	63%
2.	Female	26	48	74	37%
Total		100	100	200	100%

Source: Computed

Male children are found to be most predominantly at risk when compared to female children. It is evident that the male children are more vulnerable than the female children. However one should not forget the fact that only very few female children are identified and that there may

be several other reasons behind it. It can also be attributed to the fact that there may be many avenues available within the family structure to protect the female child and the male child is brought up more liberally.

It is also evident that the number of female children is more in number in Madurai when compared with that of Dindigul. Traditionally, it is stated that women dominate in all respects in Madurai in a similar fashion as has been reflected in the risk situation also.



“

Name: **P. Kannan**

Age: **12 Years**

Sex: **Male**

Village: **West Meentachi
Nayakkanpatty**

Education: **5th Std**

Occupation: **Tea Shop**

Father's Name: **Palanisamy**

Mother's Name: **Palaniammal**

Jeyapal discontinued his studies after 5th std. He had lost his interest in studies. His elder sister is studying in 8th std. He is working in a tea shop in his own village and is earning 60 rupees per day. The parents are working as daily wage labourers and they wanted him to continue his studies. But he is not interested in continuing his studies.

”

Table No: 4

Family Size of the Children at Risk

In most of the occasions, it has been stated the poverty is the major cause for child labor where a value addition is being made in terms of failure of different sponsored programs of different agencies. But there are several other contributing factors for this situation and that they are analysed here and the outcomes are explained as below.



S.NO	Family Particulars		No. of Children				Total
			Male		Female		
			Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Father	Yes	70	32	23	44	169
		No	9	20	3	4	36
2.	Mother	Yes	62	46	24	40	172
		No	12	6	2	8	28
3.	Brothers	1 – 2	23	18	7	21	69
		3 & above	4	9	1	14	25
4.	Sisters	1- 2	14	4	17	11	46
		3 & above	7	13	2	5	27

Source: Computed

One of the major reasons expressed by the children at risk is that the family situation or the prevailing circumstances like

- Poverty
- Larger family size
- No parental care
- Consumerist culture

All these factors have paved the way for them to get in to the present risky situation. It is also pathetic to note that the situation is quiet alarming as the dependents in the family is quiet large and that there is every need for each of the family member to do some work and earn. Disability of the dependents is also another reason for making the children to be at risk.

Apparently, it is evident that the absence of parental care and the size of the family and a shift to market and materialistic culture has resulted in the shift of the children from the safety zone to risky situation is getting increased and it needs more attention and action.

Table No: 5**The likes and Dislikes of the Children at Risk**

It is just like the two sides of a coin where the children have both the likes and dislikes in their life like anyone else. The intensity of both the components may vary from one child to another child as that depends upon several factors like sex, age, family orientation and living environment etc. Here a set of two aspects in the category of likes and dislikes are analysed and the outcomes are explained as follows.

S.NO	Likes and Dislikes		No. of Children				Total
			Male		Female		
			Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Likes	Going to School	46	20	14	42	122
		Play with friends	62	51	22	45	180
		Eating Different kinds of food	70	50	24	48	192
2.	Dislikes	Being at home	20	32	14	32	98
		Doing work	51	48	20	32	151
		Drunken parents	8	14	35	41	98

Source: Computed

Every child in a normal situation likes to be happy by playing with friends. It was found that majority of the children want to play with their friends but because of the nature of work they could not do it as they like. It is also interesting to note that most of the children are willing to go back to school. This is further supported by the dislikes of the children at risk as most of the children do not like the work they are doing and also



that they don't want to be at home as they don't like the drunken parents, and hence, they want to go back to school.

Children are uniform in which ever situation or where ever they are as they are willing to go to school and play with other children. Here it is evident from the fact that the children have expressed their interest explicitly and that their basic rights are denied and there is an urgent need to redress this situation.

“

Name: **R. Nisha**

Age: **13 Years**

Sex: **Female**

Village: **Line Street**

Education: **7th Std**

Occupation: **Paper Cover Packing Company**

Father's Name: **Rajamohammad**

Mother' Name: **Saibunisha**

Father ran away from the family many years back. The mother is always under depression and slightly mentally retarded. Their uncle and aunty thrown them out of the family. Now she and her younger sister are working in a private company in the packing section. They look after her mother, grand mother and themselves. She is interested in studies. But the present situation and family problem force them to continue to work.

”

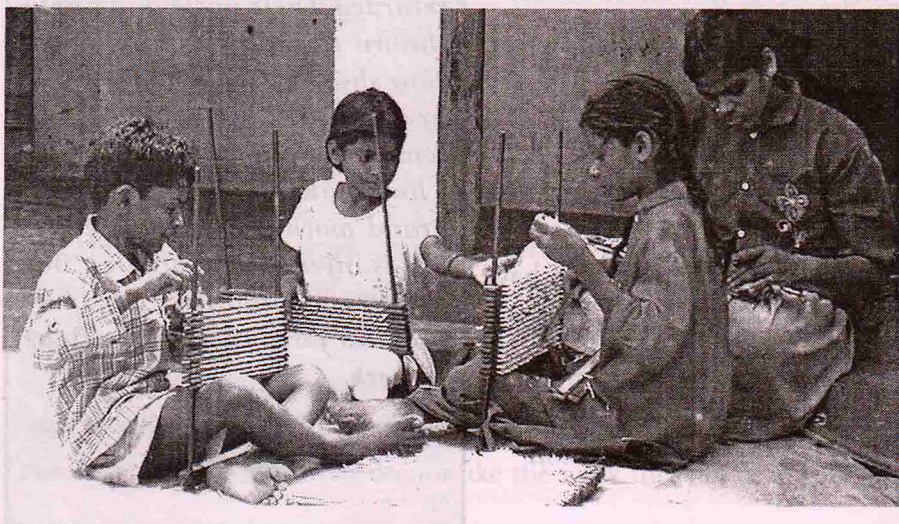
Table No: 6

The likes and Dislikes of the Children at Risk

Education is an important factor in a situation where it is a fundamental right and primary education has been made compulsory for all the children who are between the age group of 6 to 14 years.

S. No	Schooling Status	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	1 st – 5 th Standard	32	42	16	24	114	57%
2.	6 – 8 th Standard	41	8	9	23	82	41%
3.	9 th standard & above	1	2	1	1	4	2%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed



Majority of the children found at risk are drop-outs from primary education and they have not completed even 5th standard. Hence, education has become a very important expectation of the children at risk. Quite a few children at risk have crossed the primary education stream and they are in need of some sort of technical education stream which can provide better employment opportunities and that they can come out of the existing problems.

It is evident that the children are denied of their basic right to education and it is a violation against their fundamental right to education. Thus, compulsory primary education has to be taken into account and measures have to be taken accordingly.

”

Name: R. Raman

Age: 12 Years

Sex: Male

Village: Kottappatty

Education: 5th Std Discontinued

Occupation: Jute Bag Company

Father's Name: Sekar

Mother's Name: Lakshmi

Father is working as a daily wage labourer and it is a very poor family. Mother is a house wife. His parents are illiterates. Younger sister is studying in 4th Std. When he was studying 5th Std, their parents did not take good care of him due to their poverty. They sent him to Jute bag Company in the same village. For time being, he is working there because of poverty.

”

Table No: 7

Working hours of the Children at Risk

Even though child labour is prohibited under Child Labour Protection Act, all the 200 children are below the age of 14. The analysis of their working hours helped us to analyse how far they are exploited. It also helps to find out the other related aspects which are analysed and explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

S. No	Working hours	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	0 – 6 hours	29	39	14	7	89	44.5%
2.	6 – 12 hours	45	9	12	39	105	52.5%
3.	12 hours & above		4		2	6	3%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

The advantage of having children at work is that working hours never matters. About 52 per cent of children work between 6 and 12 hours and another 44 per cent of children work less than 6 hours. It is totally against the rights of the children. The working hour is from 9 am to 9 pm and it varies during festival times. It is harsh that the children don't have enough time for their own and the children lead a situation where psycho-socio care is a must.

Misuse of the time of children and total exploitation of children is found invariably in all the cases and because of this children are pushed to a high risk situation where their future at stake. Because of this, children have lost their right to leisure, play and rest.

“

Name: **K. Kumarpandy** Age: **15 Years**

Sex: **Male**

City: **Velacheri, Chennai**

Education: **9th Std**

Occupation: **Taxi Driver**

Father's Name: **G. Kuppan**

Mother's Name: **K. Kala**

Earlier he was found roaming around the railway station. He is the last child in the family. He is not well and he is disabled. Nobody in the family took care of him. So he left Chennai and came to Madurai. Since he had no place to live, he stayed at the railway station itself. Since he is disabled, some people helped with him financially.. Since he had no place to take rest at night he travelled to Rameshwaram and returned in the morning without taking tickets. Thus his life went on for 3 months. He longed to see a saviour to help him.

”



Table No: 8**Working days of the Children at Riskd**

As discussed under earlier tables, when children are employed they don't demand leave or holiday. As we have found, the children are working for longer hours. It helps to find out whether children have enough time for rest and time to enjoy their childhood.

S.NO	Working days	No. of Children				Total
		Male		Female		
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	7 days in a week	74	52	26	48	200
2.	Holidays during festivals	74	52	26	48	200
3.	Holidays during Sundays	56	-	40	-	96
4.	Others	-	16	-	14	30

Source: Computed

Another common feature found among the children at risk is that they work seven days in a week. They have holidays in the festival days only. Healthy living and growing environment is a question that needs to be answered as far as these working children are concerned. Only those working in the industries which are closed on Sundays alone have their holiday on Sunday. For others, it is a dream and those left free on Sunday also get engaged in some other work and this is explained separately.

It is evident that the basic child rights are violated once again and that the exploitation of the children is on the rise.

Table No: 9**Time period of the present work of the Children at Risk**

The following table shows how long these children have been working and thereby, assesses their vulnerability.

S. No	Time period of work	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	0 – 2 years	18	29	7	4	58	29%
2.	3 – 5 years	50	16	16	36	118	59%
3.	6 years & above	6	7	3	8	24	12%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

When compared with that of the age factor, the children belonging to the age group of 6-12 years are the most vulnerable and the number of drop-outs from primary education is the most in this age group. They are engaged in work for a minimum of three years and to the maximum of 5 years. This is absolutely against the rights of the children. These children have a different life style when they grow up and they will identify themselves differently in the society when compared with others.

It is quite clear that most of the children are new as they have been to this situation but it is not an welcome sign as these children have been working for many years, on all days without any holidays and for long working hours. It completely destroys their childhood and they are denied of their basic rights.

Table No: 10

Income of the Children at Risk

Compensation for work is the only justification we make for any work. But as far as these children are concerned, they can be paid less and they can extract more work from them. It is also taken for granted as there are flexibilities and relaxations made by employers and there is none to question them or make them accountable.

S. No	Daily Income of the children	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Up to Rs. 25	16	29	23	20	88	44%
2.	Rs. 25 – 50	55	16	2	23	96	48%
3.	Rs. 50 and above	3	7	1	5	16	8%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

The worst part of the life of the children at risk is that the compensation they receive for the work they are doing. As stated before there is no time limit for work but the compensation paid to the children is very low. Of the 200 children, 48 per cent of them receive between Rs. 25-50 and another 44 per cent receive less than Rs. 25/- as their daily wages. It is against the minimum wages act that is in practice in India.

One of the sad features found is that in some cases the salary is received by the parents directly on annual basis. In some cases, the weekly and monthly wages were also paid to the parents directly. It is quite evident from the experience that a system of bonded labor or modern slavery is in practice.

“

Name: **C. Ragavan**

Age: **12 Years**

Sex: **Male**

City: **Madurai**

Education: **7th Std**

Occupation: **Mason**

Father's Name: **Chitravelu**

Mother's Name: **Karthigarani**

He is C. Ragavan. He is 12 years old. He studied up to 7th grade. He is working in the silver factory. His father's name is Chitravelu. His mother's name is Kartikarani. He has got one sister. He is from Annupanadi. He has got one sister who is studying in the balwadi. His father is a mason. His mother works in flour mill. He did not go to the school regularly but he liked to roam around the streets with his friends. He took leave often and started smoking. Since he is not interested in studies he joined the silver factory.

”



Table No: 11

Spending Pattern of the Children at Risk

It is a common feature that when there is an income obviously there should be a pattern of expenditure as stated by the Newton's Law. Here an attempt is made to assess the expenditure pattern of these children so as to assess their life style.

S. No	Spending Pattern	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Pay to the parents	33	17	12	7	69	34.5%
2.	Partially pay to the parents	14	21	8	13	56	28%
3.	Save by self	19	5	4	15	43	21.5%
4.	Spend fully	5	8	2	13	32	16%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

In a consumerist culture, the children at risk are also willing to be in the same frame as majority of the children prefer to spend the money they earn on their own. Savings is referred to the fact that the wages are kept by the employer and when it becomes a large amount it is paid to the parents or care takers of the children. It is again a violence that the children do not have the right to own the money they earn.

It can be concluded that the children are making attempt to add value to the family's meager income and inadequate additional income sources. However, this justification is not acceptable and also needs a shift from this.

Table No: 12

Spending Pattern of the Children at Risk

The present situation of the children has not occurred in a vacuum or on its own. There are several contributing factors and those factors are being analysed and presented below:

S.NO	Factors		No. of Children				Total
			Male		Female		
			Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Family	Absence of Parental care - No parents	8	11	4	13	36
		Disintegrated Family	16	11	27	24	78
2.	School	Teachers	12	36	22	16	86
		Education itself	9	21	7	10	47
3.	Community	Caste System	-	-	-	-	
		Poverty	70	48	22	48	188
4.	Other reasons		21	17	-	-	38

Source: Computed

The various reasons that lead to the present situation of the children at risk are classified:

Family: It is a situation where the parental care is absent either totally or partially. It is also revealed that the family size is big and the senior member of the family does not earn anything and they totally depend on the children. In some cases, the family structure is totally absent and the children are with some care takers who engage the children in work.

Educational system: The nature of this system is not child friendly and that the harsh teachers and punishments do not make the learning process enjoyable and suitable to the children and hence, they opt out of the regular education stream.

Poverty: This is the most common reason made by almost all children for their risky situation. The large size of family, irresponsible parents, etc. is some of the contributing factors for this.

Others: It Is nothing but the external environment that has made the children to opt out from the school and the orientation that they get when they grow. This is compared with the other children living around as they are happy without going to school.

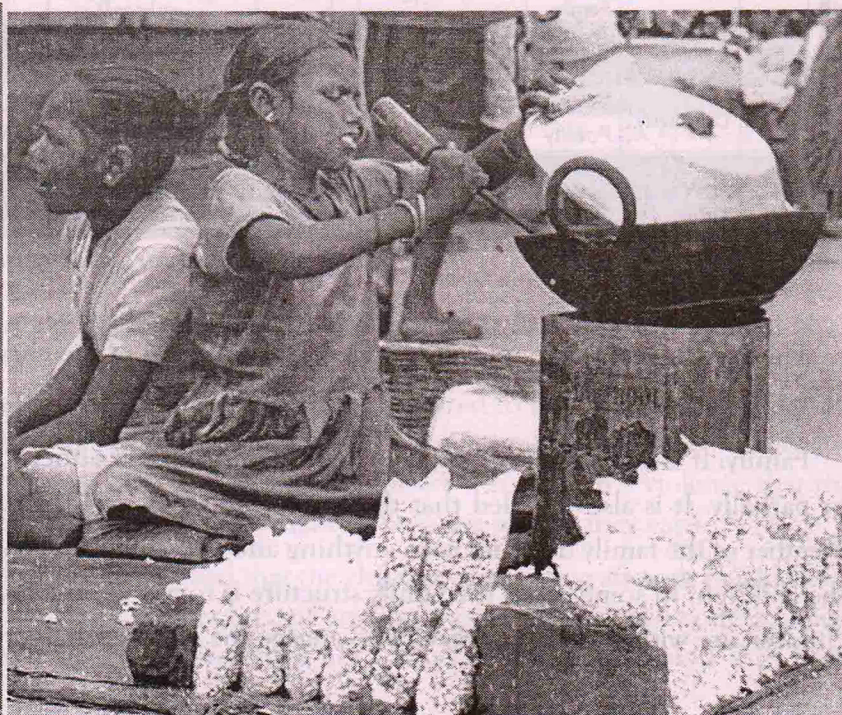


Table No: 13.

Consequences of being Children at Risk

Being at risk is not an end in itself. There is something more to it. By being at risk, they lose their childhood primarily and fully. The rights of children are violated left and right as well as horizontally and vertically.

S.NO	Consequences		No. of Children				Total
			Male		Female		
			Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Happy	No need to go to school	12	19	4	12	47
		Have money to spend on own	2	19	3	8	32
		Peer Group	12	14	-	-	26
2.	Not Happy	Problems in doing the work	52	52	16	42	162
		Harassment	-	-	11	18	29
		Blame	56	43	12	37	148
		Cannot play like other children	72	49	16	41	178
3.	Other		3	2	4	7	16

Source: Computed

The mixed response is that the children are not happy in doing the present work. Though there are some contributing factors for the happiness but the ultimate response is that they are not happy. The long hours of work and inadequate time and space to play, rest and leisure along with the fact that what they earn cannot be owned by them, etc. are reasons for their unhappiness. The children also feel that they are victimized even in the workplace also as they are the youngest and there is no one to take care, react and respond. The fact is that the children are not aware of the importance of their right to education and they don't realize what they are losing by losing their right to education. Even if they say that they are happy in working, they can not be allowed to continue to work because the only place where they should be at this age is "School".

Table No: 14

Nature of engagement of the Children at Risk during Holidays

When these children get some holidays during festival times and national holidays, they spend those days and time to play, watch TV or movies, etc.

S.NO	Nature of Holidays	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Play with friends	34	41	5	9	89	44.5%
2.	Watch TV	13	6	16	14	49	24.5%
3.	Movies	16	26	-	-	42	21%
4	Do some other work	2	14	-	4	20	10%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

Though only limited time is left for leisure and pleasure, the children prefer to make best out of the time available for them. Unlike the other common children, these children at risk prefer to spend the time with their friends by playing, watching TV and go for movies. This has a relation with the spending pattern of the children. Those are the children who have the earnings on their own prefer to spend as they wish and movies are one of the available best options for them. There are few children who go for other work. By this we mean that the work which their parents and other seniors in the family are doing and these children go and assist them for which compensation is usually not paid.

It is evident that the children are expecting some sort of change from their routine life and these holidays could provide them a breathing space.

“

Name: **N. Mariswamy**

Age: **13 Years**

Sex: **Male**

City: **Madurai**

Education: **8th Std**

Occupation: **Coolie**

Father's Name: **Nagarajan**

Mother's Name: **Muthu Irulayee**

He is Mariswamy. He is 13 years old. His qualification is 8th grade. He works in the silver factory. His father's name is Nagarajan. His mother's name is Muthu Irulaee but she is no more. He has got one elder brother, one younger brother and one sister. He is from Chinna Anupanadi. His father is daily wage labour. His mother died of chicken fox. He dropped out after 8th standard and working in a silver factory and earned 50 rupees per month. He also started smoking and started taking alcohol. He lives a care free life.

”



Table No: 15

Attitude towards Other Children

The children those who are at differential situation from that other children have a opinion of their own, which in turn, explains the situation and the expectations of the children. Thus, this part of the analysis is made on these lines and the outcomes are presented as;

S.NO	Attitude		No. of Children				Total
			Male		Female		
			Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	School Going Children	Feel like going back to school	56	58	16	40	170
		Happy that no need to go to school	4	5	-	-	9
		No idea	-	-	13	18	31
2.	Playing Children	Feel like playing	49	46	12	26	133
		No idea	-	-	14	17	31

Source: Computed

Their attitude and mind-set of the children at risk when they see the other normal school going children is given here. The children at risk also want to go to school and play while they are engaged in some kinds of work. The majority of the children prefer to be like the normal children. Now, it is the duty of various stakeholders to ensure that these children at risk also need to lead a mainstream life and otherwise, it may lead to a unsecured and unhealthy future for these children, which is not at all a welcome sign for the society as a whole. It is quite evident that all the children are needed to be treated as equals.

“

Name: **Sami Raj**

Age: **15 Years**

Sex: **Male**

City: **Madurai**

Education: **7th Std**

Occupation: **Appalam Making**

Father's Name: **Nagarajan**

Mother's Name: **Muthu Irulayee**

He is Sami Raj. He is 15 years old. He has studied up to 7th grade. His father's Name is Thiraviam. He works in Appalam Company and earns 40 rupees per month. He has got two brothers and one sister. He is from Chindamani. His father also worked in Appalam company. Since he had chest pain he was admitted in the hospital. The doctors told them that he needs an operation. So he got 50,000 rupees from Appalam Company for his father's surgery. His two brothers are also working in the Appalam Company to repay the money. His sister who was studying also started to going for a job since the family needs support.

”



Table No: 16

Attitude towards going back to school

It is important that the interests of the children are to be protected to the maximum extent possible so as to ensure their rights. It is also important that their basic rights have to be protected by all means and when education is made compulsory to them, the outcome of their expectations to make this a reality are explained here:

S.NO	Nature of School	No. of Children				Total	Percentage
		Male		Female			
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai		
1.	Residential	17	15	8	22	62	31%
2.	Go to school from home	38	19	7	14	78	39%
3.	Special School for children like them	9	8	2	7	26	13%
4.	Evening Schools meant for working children	10	10	9	5	34	17%
Total		126		74		200	100%

Source: Computed

It is the attitude that matters. Invariably all the children at risk prefer to go back to school. Though the forms are different, the choice is one. It also reveals that the children reflect the situation they are living now and they desperately need to overcome the situation. It is a welcome sign that the children on their own are taking this decision of going back to school and that they have choices of going to schools. By taking into account the available facilities at home and the surroundings and the knowledge they have, the children opt for some facilities to continue with their education.

It is true that all the children are to be provided with education and their choices are also to be protected equally.

Table No: 17

What need to be done for prevention of children from risk?

A common statement made when there is some crisis or risk is experienced is "Prevention is better than cure". Similarly, in the present context, an attempt was made and the responses of the children at risk are classified and presented as follows.

S.NO	Methods of prevention	No. of Children				Total
		Male		Female		
		Dindigul	Madurai	Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Compulsory Education with food, uniform etc	70	51	23	40	184
2.	Employment for parents	59	40	21	42	162
3.	Teachers should not beat students	72	51	25	48	196
4.	Don't know	5	2	6	9	22

Source: Computed

The mindset of the children at risk is very clear from table - 17. When they are provided with the option of going to schools with necessary support like food, uniform etc., it will really help them to come out of the clutches of work. Another set of response from those who were most affected by parents feel that if there is enough employment and income to their parents, there is no need for the children to go work. They also feel that a congenial atmosphere is necessary in the schools for continuing the education.

“

Name: **Shunmuga Vel**

Age: **14Years**

Sex: **Male**

City: **Madurai**

Education: **7th Std**

Occupation: **Appalam Making**

Father's Name: **Rajesh** Mother's Name: **Murugaswari**

He is Shunmuga Vel. He is 14 years old. He has studied up to 7th grade. He is working in a Appalam company. There are 6 members in the family. His father's name is Rajesh. He earns Rs. 50 per day. Shunmuga Vel is working in the appalam company. His father is an auto driver and the money he earns is just enough for his alcohol consumption. His mother works in a Appalam Company. She earns 60 rupees per day. She borrowed 35,000 from the company. She wants to repay the money by working in the Appadam Company.

”



Table No: 18**Problems faced exclusively by Girl Children**

A special treatment is needed for the girl children when they are compared and assessed with their male counterparts. An independent effort is made as we have quite a large number of girl children as respondents and special care and package has to be planned for them. By taking in to account this feature, following analysis was made and the results are presented as follows:

S.NO	Problems Faced	No. of Children		Total
		Dindigul	Madurai	
1.	Physical abuse	8	20	28
2.	Psychological	24	25	49
3.	Sexual abuse	-	02	02
4.	Negligence	22	34	56

Source: Computed

Girl children are utmost risk as this sounds like a contradiction to the earlier statements. It is vital to state that the privacy and care for the girl is not available. In most of the cases, the responses are very annoying as the girl children are treated with a different attitude. It can be stated that girl children are treated as slaves when they are engaged in domestic work. The mobility of the girl children is also very much restricted. This reveals that there is a need for special attention, care and support for the girl children.

Table No: 19

Probable Number of Children at Risk as Identified by the Respondents

S.NO	Districts	Male	Female	Total
1.	Dindigul	180	70	250
2.	Madurai	225	100	325
Total		405	170	575

Source: Computed

The last part of the assessment is to take stock of the magnitude of children at risk in the area where the assessment is made. In an open discussion made with the respondents, it was found that sizable number of children at risk are available in the region. The figure mentioned in the table above is quite alarming and needs an immediate plan of action to protect the future generation.

Name: V.Arumugam

Sex: Male

Education: 6th Std

Father's Name: Muthu

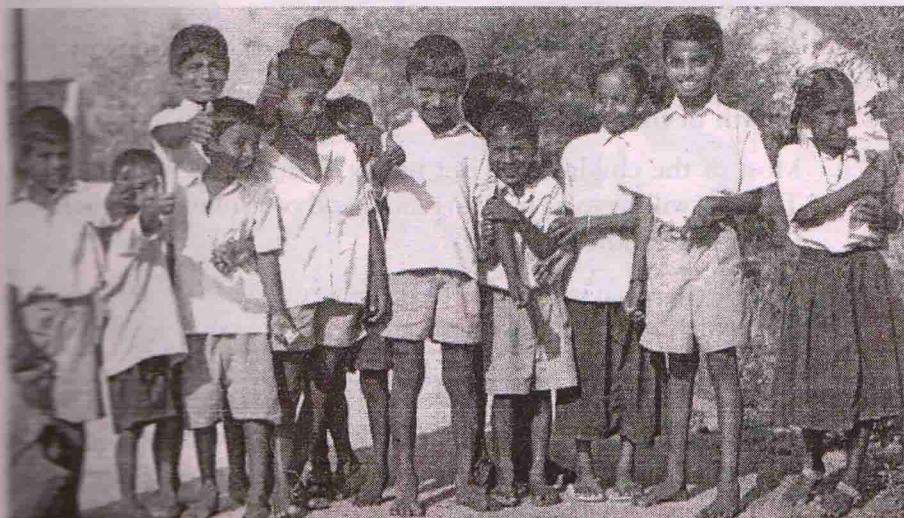
Age: 12 Years

City: Madurai

Occupation: Watch Man

Mother's Name: Mariammal

Father is a drunkard, and working as a watchman in T.V.S. Parcel Service Company at Dindigul. His younger sister named Durga Jeyashree is studying 2nd Std. Mother is working as a daily wage labour. Arumugam frequently had quarrel with his sister and the parents always find fault with him and frequently beaten him up for the same. He was also absent for many days in his school due to this reason and also due to pain in his ears. When his parents found him not attending the school, they scolded and beaten him up. Hence he had often ran away from his home. This is the third time he ran away from his home. He tried to go to Chennai by train. But he couldn't. He is roaming around the Junction.



III. MAJOR FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The major findings of the study are given below:

- a. The main reasons for children to be at risk are family conditions like large size of the family, disintegrated family, lack of parental care, etc. It is important to note that the parents are not paying enough attention to the children.
- b. Most of the children have dropped out of school and they have not even completed primary education, which is a right to them.
- c. Most of the children work for long hours up to 12 hours a day, 7 days a week and throughout the year. They get holidays only during festivals. They are not paid even minimum wages for the work they do.

- d. Many of them are working in hazardous or dangerous or risky work situations which are not at all a safety zone for the proper growth of the children.
- e. Most of the children are not happy in doing the present work. They are willing to go back to school and continue their education like other children.
- f. They are not having proper health and nutritional care, which is very much essential for the proper growth of the children.
- g. These children are increasing in numbers from year to year.
- h. Girl children are more vulnerable when compared with that the male children.
- i. They are in need of psycho-social care to overcome the trauma they are experiencing.
- j. They think that the parent need some support to generate income so that they can continue their education.
- k. They have a clear view that the children should become like normal children in future.
- l. In need of a space for themselves to relax and grow.
- m. Having a bad feeling that they are not like the other children who are going to school and playing with their friends

OR



IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Program for children at risk should be a continuous one and not a one time event or once in a week or month activity. It should function regularly with adequate animator(s) and volunteers.

Psycho-social care: Children at risk should be given psycho-social care including counseling and for this purpose, trained and experienced professionals should be made available. The other option is that the staff members may be trained on psycho-social care. The research team based on its experience and exposure would like to recommend two psycho-social care programs in particular. They are "Wave of life" and "Comics". These are two different types of psycho-social care programs that will help children at risk to a great extent.

Wave of life is one way of providing psycho social care to the children and parents through stories.

Objectives:

- Make the children concentrate.

- Identify their ambition/goal.
- Identify barriers/hurdles.
- Finding out solutions to overcome the barriers.

Comics:

Objective: To enable children to identify social issues and find solutions through child participation.

Methodology:

- Problem Identification
- Whom to approach?
- Finding solutions
- Conclusion / Achievement

Process:

- Children are given capacity building in this process.
- They sit in a group and discuss.
- Transforming the issues into story forms.
- Depicting them through drawings.
- Exhibiting the creations.

This Psycho-social care program will produce the following impact: Through this, children are able to develop rational thinking, bring out inner feelings, better the relationship between children, parents and community, develop individual talents. Staff members have become trainers of the program. Children are able to identify their problems. Individual skills of the children like drawing, speech, story telling, poem and song writing, thinking capabilities, academic skills, etc. are developed.

Screening of films: There are hundreds of documentary films available on different themes related to children, which may be of great interest to

them. It also enables children at risk to understand what they are undergoing and gives them various options. It is an easy way of reaching out to children, which makes it an effective tool through which children can understand the issues and look for alternatives.

Children's Forums: These children can be formed in the form of forums that provide them opportunities to learn governance and govern themselves. It helps them to become responsible citizens.

Child Protection Committees at community level: Child Protection Committees comprising of village leaders, local elected representatives, responsible government officials, child representatives and others should be formed to provide adequate support to children's forums. It will monitor violations of the rights of children and take necessary interventions.

Empowerment of Adolescents: Since many of the children at risk are in this age group, they should be given special emphasis in the program of SJDT. There should be awareness, sensitization programs and counseling is a must for these children.

Linkage of Women self-help groups with Children at risk: If we have to overcome the problems of children at risk, it is very much essential to link them with women SHGs so that they have access to loans for their livelihood support and development.

Motivational Programs: Children should be given regular and continuous motivational programs so that they can overcome the reasons for their vulnerability. Through this, they get inspiration and enough motivation to study and come up in their life.

Volunteers Support: Enough volunteers should be mobilized to support these children at risk. From among the volunteers, suitable people should be identified to serve as mentors for the children at risk. Each child at risk should have a mentor who can guide them in their life and be a positive influence.

Past Children at Risk as Models: Children who were at risk earlier but who came up well and to a good level in their life should be made and

shown as models to the children who are at present risk. This will motivate them and get inspiration to overcome the risk. They will serve as better role models to these children.

Vocational education: Vocational education may be provided to children who are in dire needs for a work. But it should be strictly meant for children in the age group of 14-18. But it should be kept in mind that for all children up to the age of 18, maximum efforts should be made to continue their education. Only in rare cases, they should be allowed to go for work. SJDT may set up computer centres, tailoring units, cell phone service units, and other vocational education streams that will have demand to generate adequate income for them.

Creation of Child Friendly environment: The home or working place where children will come together should be child friendly. In addition, child friendly methodologies should be adopted when we deal with children at risk. There should be more activities in the centre to engage with these children.

Livelihood support for families of children at risk: In case, poverty is the sole reason for the risky situation, some of the family members should be given livelihood education and support on one condition that they will not send their child for work and will only send to schools. On this assurance, they should be supported.

Staff Exposure trips: Staff should be taken for exposure trips to organizations that have a similar program for children at risk. It gives them an idea as to what kind of additional activities can be done and how their program can be made more effective.

Staff Capacity Building Program: If all these activities have to be carried out, staff of SJDT should be strengthened further. Their capacities should be built further on child rights and various techniques to take care of the children at risk.



Annexure

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Respondent No:
2. Age of the respondent: years
3. Sex of the respondent: MALE / FEMALE
4. Family Background:
 - a. Father Occupation: b. Mother: Occupation
 - c. Brothers: d. Sisters:
5. What are things you like?
6. What the things that you don't like?
7. Have you ever been gone to school? YES / NO
If yes means up to which class?
8. What is the kind of work you are doing now?

9. What has made you to do this present work?

10. Since how long you are doing this work?

11. How long you work?

a. How many hours you work in a day?

b. How many day in a week you work?

c. do you have holidays? YES / NO

If yes, what will you do in the holidays and when is a holiday for you"

12. Are you happy by doing this work? Yes / No

13. How much do you earn from this work?

14. What do you do with the earnings?

15. What are the things that have affected you very much while doing this work?

16. How do you feel when see a school going child and a playing while you are doing the work?

17. Have you ever though of coming out of this work? YES / NO

18. Are you ready to go school again? YES / NO

If yes, what is your expectation to go to school?

19. Do you have any idea that how can we stop the children from going to work?.

20. Any other information to add:

(If possible can you locate the number of children working like you in your area?

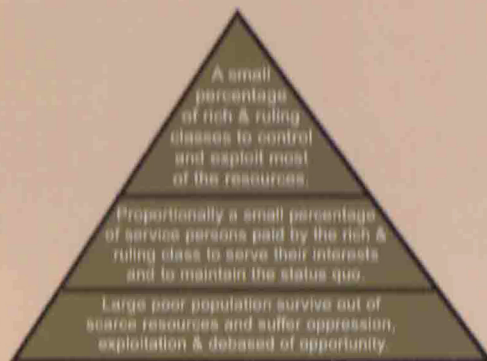
(Only for the Female Children: What are the problems you are facing while doing this work)

CHANDRA

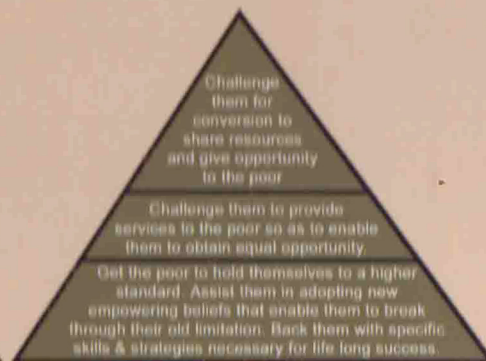


St. Joseph's Development Trust

Existing Social Order



Process of Empowerment



Vision of a Empowerment Society



Mission Statement

Our organization in participation with the grass root level people seeks to serve irrespective of caste creed or religion, the weaker sections of the society, women, children, youth and marginalized communities, and offer them the opportunities for developing their potentials leading them to have a self sustaining life.



St. Joseph's Development Trust

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