

From Human Rights Education to Human Rights Defense

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Students Ms.Meghamala and Raja Jerubabel of Lutheran School Rajahmundry and Ms.Chandini for NKE English Medium School, Rajahmundry stood tall among a host of government schools teachers as they described how their Human Rights Education classes had given them the knowledge, skill and attitude and the opportunity to take on human rights violations around them. Their narratives were the most inspirational part of the Inaugural Two Day Residential Training Programme for government teachers on the formation of Human Rights. The programme which had 48 participants is being jointly supported by the German Government and Don Bosco Mondo, Bonn.

People's Action for Rural Awakening had initiated Human Rights Education both in government and private schools in Andhra Pradesh way back in 2007. Over the year it succeeded in taking human rights education to 210 schools spread over 10 districts in AP. Showcasing this work PARA succeeded in getting the AP Government to train 167,000 teachers as part of their in-service training programme under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (Universal Primary Education) Programme. The training called for setting up Human Rights Clubs in every school in Andhra Pradesh.

The present programme is a follow up on our Human Rights Education Programme. Over the next three years we intend to set up set up 1000 human rights clubs in government schools across 10 districts in Andhra Pradesh.

The programme was inaugurated by the Divisional Revenue Officer, Mr P Sampath Kuma. The occasion was used to introduce the Juvenile Justice Act functionaries to the teachers so that they get familiar with the Juvenile Justice System. The teachers in turn would then be able to facilitate a student and Juvenile Justice Functionaries interface. The Mandal Educational Officer, Mr S V Krishna Reddy, Mrs P Syamala Devi, Member of Juvenile Justice Board, Rangareddy District; Mrs Rebecca Rani, Member of Child Welfare Committee, West Godavari District; Mr Pandey, Member of Child Welfare Committee, East Godavari

33 teachers and adult guides from East Godavari and 6 teachers, adult guides from West Godavari, 7 guests of whom 3 were Government officials and 12 persons from the staff participated in the programme.

The Revenue Divisional Officer participating eagerly in the Inaugural is an indicator of the Government Agency's appreciation of the work done by PARA and also of the cooperation they extend to us in the work regarding Human Rights Clubs. The District Educational Officer visiting the workshop despite counseling being held for teachers on that day is also ample proof for the place the concept of Human Rights Clubs and the works of PARA have in their minds.

Discussions we had with Smt.Usharani IAS, the Commissioner for School Education cum State Project Director, Rajiv Vidya Mission give us the hope that the government will initially adopt

for the whole state the module we are preparing for training teachers and students and then will proceed to give training for formation of human rights clubs to all the teachers in their annual in-service training programme for teachers. That one will be as big a mile stone as the one where all teachers were trained in human rights education. Andhra Pradesh government is the only one government that has rolled out human rights training for all its teachers! Now we are in the threshold of getting all teachers trained in formation of human rights clubs!

Human Rights Clubs in schools will give the students a chance to exercise their right to participation, prove that they are today's citizens and not tomorrow's. This initiative will be an excellent opportunity for participatory democracy for children and will provide for them the space to demand governance accountability, advocacy and lobbying for their rights of children at large.