

HUMAN RIGHT CLUBS IN SCHOOLS

Will children express their opinion freely?

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The hills are beautiful. The valleys of the Eastern Ghats have green cover and a cool climate. The prolonged summer of 2014 has not affected the charm of Chinthapally, Aruku or Ananthgiri in Vishakapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. The DIMSA dance of the tribal people inhabiting this area is original and brilliant. Do the tribal people enjoy a peaceful and contented life in these beautiful hills and valleys? Are their Human rights protected? We may get an unbiased opinion from the children of this area. The human right clubs being established by PARA in the tribal schools here encourage children to express their views and opinions freely. When children speak freely and adults listen and implement their suggestions, development and Human rights can co-exist.

These clubs are based on the children's "**right to participation**". The human right clubs are for high school children who join the club voluntarily. A child friendly teacher guides them. PARA offers training to the teacher guides and the leaders of these clubs. Trainings were organized at Chintapally and Araku for teachers and leaders of the human right clubs in schools. Twenty nine teachers representing 29 high schools of Chinthapally, Koyyuru, GK Veedhi mandals attended the training organized at Chintapally on 28th and 30th June 2014. The Mandal education officer Mr. T. Ramarao was the chief guest. The training held at Araku on 1st and 2nd July attracted twenty two teachers from Araku, Ananthagiri and Dummilagudem Mandals representing 20 high schools. The teachers got acquainted with Human rights, Child rights, the objectives of the club. They discussed different ways of initiating the club in the schools. The teachers enjoyed the demo of club meeting in which they themselves acted as the club leaders/members.

The teachers went back and send in their club leaders- boys and girls -for a two day training. A "Camp Fire" was the high light of the club leaders training. The students sat around a big fire, cracked jokes, sang songs, played party games and danced "DIMSA" This is community dance is at the heart of the tribal culture. The dance is an indispensable part of any festival in the villages. The children learn the dance at a very young age. The camp fire banished fear and insecurity feelings from their minds. The club leaders participated in group discussions on "Child rights" and the six club groups in which they can join. They learnt how to conduct a club meeting and how to present their resolutions to the local authorities. They became very confident about expressing their opinions freely in club meetings. They became aware of their right to have drinking water and toilets in schools. The lack of furniture in most of the schools would be on the agenda of club meetings. Children have opinion on the poorly maintained school buildings, ineffective teaching, school drop-outs, water supply in villages, medical care, roads etc.

Towards the end of the training after filling the evaluation sheets many of the leaders came forward to express their opinions on the training. Many of them confessed that they were frightened when the teachers send them to Araku for the training. Now that they did enjoy Human Rights training and some of them wanted to prolong the training by another day.

