

***And Now the Hills and their Children will talk the Language of Rights***

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We are just back after enlisting 82 Heads of Schools for Adivasi Children to initiate Human Rights Education in their schools. This meant that they first attend an Orientation Programme themselves and then sent one teacher from the faculty for a Three Day Training on Human Rights Education. 96 Teachers attended the three day training programme in 3 batches. And now another 11556 students of 6th class will be doing human rights education along with their other subjects.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July we had returned from the Paderu (ITDA) Integrated Tribal Development Agency after having made all the arrangements for the Heads of Schools Orientation Programme in view of taking up HRE in all the adivasi schools run by the government. The programme had been fixed for the 9<sup>th</sup> July. But on 4<sup>th</sup> July we were informed over phone to put all the preparations on hold and renegotiate the plans with the Project Officer (PO). It was a couple of days after Cherukuri Rajkumar alias Azad was gunned by the AP Police allegedly in a fake encounter. And in the Agency area every government official is vary of Human Rights of any kind! We were certain that the phone call something to do with killing of Azad. So it was with some trepidation that we fixed an appointment with the PO, Ms.Nirmala IAS for renegotiation. On 8<sup>th</sup> July we met her in her office. But quite contrary to our apprehensions she was not only very welcoming but showed a great lot of interest in the teaching of human rights. There and then she issued orders to all Heads of Schools to attend the Orientation Programme which with her concurrence was fixed for 21<sup>st</sup>. It was a roller coaster ride after that. 82 HMs for Orientation Programme, 9 days of training for 96 teachers in three batches: altogether a very rewarding exercise! All of it was deep in the forested areas of AP with nature blessing us with copious but not very welcome rains on all those days. But that did not dampen the spirits of the participants: some had to travel over 2 hours daily to come to the training programme! The efforts of CH. Venkatrao, the State Coordinator and Bro. G. Antony, the Associate Coordinator had truly paid off.

In the end we realized that most teachers wanted not merely to be HRE teachers but Human Rights Defenders. That was very heartening indeed for what else is the goal of Human Rights Education!

Yes the call of the International Director of the Salesian Society has reached the remotest hamlets deep in the forests.