

## RESTORATION OF RIGHTS AND REALISING RESPONSIBILITIES

It is true that the vulnerable communities such as women, dalits, poor and children do not have any identity and their self-esteem is totally disturbed. Moreover their rights are grabbed by the oppressors. Amongst all, children irrespective of caste, class and sex are most vulnerable and denial of rights has been a crucial issue. Though the sovereign state is the prime delegator to provide all rights to children but it has not provided so and the legislations are also inactive.



Adults in families do not come forward to provide rights to children and almost 95% of children are deprived of their basic rights. In spite of the Indian laws that talk about the primary responsibility of caring for children is vested with the families, the enforcement is very weak. Hence the

children are not provided with even basic rights. SPEECH as a development organization concerning to retrieve the hopes of child rights involved in creating awareness to children and other stakeholders involved in protecting the rights of children.



Capacity building is the technique SPEECH uses to bring in change in the attitude of the stakeholders. In past

centralized sessions have been conducted inviting children,CRPC members,parents,elected representatives and teachers from the target villages.Ofcourse the impacts have been enormous.On realizing the difficulties in organizing the children to a centralized place,during this quarter the staff are asked to conduct trainings on child rights in the respective villages to reach out many children.517 children were provided with the input by 10 staff members.One hand we were able to cover a big mass and on another hand we were able to improve the capacities of the staff members.



In order to increase the competitive spirit among the staff members compliment to the best teacher was announced.The staff members used several innovative methodologies and at last out puts have been provided to the children .The village level training attracted the parents to participate passively which gave them an opportunity to internalize the concepts of childrights .Hence the local level training have been two way beneficial one the children have restored their rights and the adults have realized their responsibilities.

### **LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR.....**

*Give generously to Him and do so without a grudging heart, then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land, therefore I command you to be openhanded toward the poor and needy in*

*your land. Deut 15:10-11* How blessed we would be if we could follow this command! It took young children to implement this in their life and what a joy it was to see their pleasure in helping other people!

SPEECH in sponsorship partnership with CCFC has been implementing several development activities to children, families and communities .People in the target villages of SPEECH are one way or other benefited out of the programs .Basically it is human ethics to be reciprocal and to show gratitude towards what they have enjoyed .SPEECH-CCFC implemented Children gathering in all working villages. Priority is to enable children to get involved in various activities which enhance their learning abilities and to extend solidarity with everyone. Different activities are planned and the ultimate aim through these activities is to make each and every child attending the get together be motivated and develop skills for everyday living and an attitude of being kind and compassionate to others who are not as fortunate as themselves.

SPEECH decided to teach the children the value of sharing what they have, with others. Even as they are taught to give back to the Lord the best of what He has given to them, the thought that the children should implement it, with people, to experience the joy of giving and sharing was of utmost priority. It was also a way of teaching them to say thank you to God for all that He has been doing for them.

In this initiative the children actively involved by contributing what they can, each child brought things like fruits, vegetables, rice, groceries anything

that they could , from home. What each child brought was not too much but everything was put together and sorted out item wise, and with the help of the members of CRPC (Child Rights Protection Committee) they were auctioned. People were very generous at the auctioning. Even though the items that were brought were not of great value, people around went with the spirit of the program and involved themselves with great enthusiasm. Rice that was normally sold for Rs. 2.00 a kilo was auctioned for Rs.80.00...And that by itself was a huge morale booster for the children. Various other items were also sold with the same zest.

The amount that was raised through this auction was given to the children present there. The children themselves discussed and decided as to who should be helped with the money raised. They were allowed to make the decision themselves as adults would, without any interference from the adult members present there. This enabled the children make mature decisions and enabled them to feel a sense of participation in a very important and major decision making process for their age.

It was amazing to see the thought process that went on in the way they took their decisions! They were given an opportunity to announce the selection they had made to everyone present there, and share as to what influenced them and how they would set about accomplishing the decision taken by them. The children choose the deserving child from the village and bought what that child wanted in order to encourage them to continue their education.

One of the children chosen was majorly ill with a heart disease and was extremely poor. The other children chosen also were genuinely in need of help. One of the father of a child had met with an accident and was hospitalized and was still not able to move around. This child and his sibling were bought school uniforms. Another child was going to school regularly in a torn uniform and the children observed this and decided to get him a new dress, and yet another child had lost her mother and there were 4 children in that family. These 4 children were being taken care of by their grandmother and were in need of clothes. The choice of these children reflects the maturity and thought process of the children involved. They were able to discern who was genuinely in need of help and without any hesitation went about implementing their decision.

The idea of teaching the children that there is joy in giving and sharing was a huge success which is evident from the way the children and the adults present participated. Such values when inculcated at a very tender age go a long way in helping the children be kind and compassionate and understanding towards the needy in the society. This was a very positive influence on not just the children but also on the people present around as there was a lesson to be learned from the enthusiasm of the children. It is our sincere hope and trust and faith in God that each child participating in this program will grow up to be good individuals, with a different attitude towards the needy and with the care and compassion required to make the world go round.

**SPEECH** – CCFC is very proud and happy at the success of this program and for helping in making a little bit of difference in the lives of every child

present. Dedication to this cause is their priority and to create eminent excellent and dedicated individuals from a tender age their goal.

## **CHILDRIGHTS PROTECTION COMMITTEES - INSTRUMENT TO SAFEGUARD**

### **RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

Basically the children are considered to be persons cannot speak/ who do not have any identity not having property and who work for others. They need to have shelter, education, food, clothes, protection, recreation, guidance and basic infrastructural facilities to ensure their rights. However almost 95% of the children deprived of their basic rights such as survival, Development, Protection and participation . Adults, since they posses power do not create conducive child friendly environment for children to enjoy their childhood rights. Violations start from the house itself and extend to society and even wherever the children go / dwell in.Childrights violations take place in different forms hence the self dignity of children is totally curtailed. Their talents are not accepted, decisions are not taken into consideration, more over they are excluded in the families as well in community. Inspite the children give a status to every adult as father/mother, they are not reciprocally treated and given rights. Abuses, harassments, physical violences are increasing day by day.

In order to voice against the atrocities caused to children SPEECH has formed strong peoples forums called childrights protection committees. The primary role is to address the childrights violation in the villages itself. Selected members from Nanayam, village level federation, Panchayat raj institution, local teachers, health workers, youth groups and other volunteers interested in childrights protection are members of CRPC. CRPCs will identify child rights violation in each village and in the monthly meeting prioritized issues will be handled jointly. The members contribution is a must to ensure representation. In the later stage the CRPC will totally handle the project implementation. Apex body at the block level will also be constituted so that it will act as a pressure group. Since child rights violation is a cross cutting issue it should be effectively handled by the people themselves. Here is an Excellent case study by chellaiyapuram CRPC. The Head Master of chellaiapuram government middle school used to come to school with alcohol influence and ask the students to buy cigerattes. When his misbehavior was found out by one of the CRPC members Mr.Marimuthu,he along with the Vice president and few CRPC of chellaipuram met the Assistant Educational officer and filed a petition. As a result from that day onwards the particular Headmaster was suspended and transferred to some other school. Such a way the CRPCs are very powerful and safe guarding the rights of children.

### **CHILD RIGHTS PROTECTION COMMITTEES THE CHANGE AGENTS**

Change is a process and if it is rapid, spontaneous, progressive there needs to be motivators, facilitators and moderators. Of course understanding children, their potentials, duties and rights is a tough one

because the adult who are holding the power have to loose it in order to empower children. Constant efforts and initiatives have to be taken to empower the children because they are the leaders of today not tomorrow. Though the children give identity as either father or mother to adult they are not provided with even basic rights. SPEECH with a great hope of ensuring child hood rights to children creates awareness to children and concerned stakeholders on rights. The strategy of organizing child rights protection committees to accelerate the momentum of providing child rights has been successful in the past. Since the CRPC have come forwarded to address child rights violations.



In order to create a platform for children to come together, children get together programs were organized .During this quarter in January, and March the CRPC's took active role in organizing celebration of pongal and International women's day for children .They organized pongal conducted several competitions for children and distributed prizes.



In those events they mobilized contribution from the whole village which was an indicator that the community is open for providing rights to children. The CRPC's have created lot of impacts not only amongst the children but also to the community. CRPC's are the change agents and if it is accelerated the destination is not too far.

### **SEMINAR ON IMPACTS OF GLOBAL WARMING**

Global warming is one of the serious issues threatens the whole universe not only human beings but also every living beings. Without realizing the impacts human at all levels pollute the nature in several forms. Though the North is the causative agent for more emission of carbon, South is also affected because of the excessive emission. In spite of several effects taken to mitigate climate crisis through campaign and advocacy certain countries are yet not in favour to this initiative. However SPEECH as a part of global campaign involves in creating

awareness among its focus groups in the working areas. In partnership with CCF Liaison office in India organized a one day seminar on Impacts of global warming in particular how climate change affects the agriculture which is the basic livelihood for the villagers.

Global warming is projected to have significant impacts on agriculture, temperature and precipitation. These are the factors determine the carrying capacity of the biosphere to produce enough food for the human population as well to domestic animals. Despite technological advances, such as improved varieties, genetically modified organisms, and irrigation systems weather is still a key factor in agricultural productivity as well as soil properties and natural communities. In the long run the climatic change could affect agriculture in many ways

### **Productivity in terms of quality and quantity**

Agricultural practices, through changes of water use and agricultural impacts such as fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides.

Environmental effects in particular in relation of frequency and intensity of soil drainage, soil erosion, reduction of crop diversity.

Rural space, through the loss and gain of cultivated lands, land speculation , and hydraulic amenities.

Adaptation, organisms may become more or less competitive, as well as humans may develop urgency to develop more competitive organism, such as flood resistant or salt resistant varieties of rice.

In the Global scenario the rice production has been dropping in and in 2003 there was a short of 93 million ton. As rice eaters / lovers habitating in South have to be very careful and cautiously address this issue. While giving importance to rice production, minor millets do not find a place in the minds of farmers. On the outset farmers and rural people are the ultimate sufferers of impacts of global warming. SPEECH intends to create awareness among the target communities to mitigate the climate crisis so that the younger generation could lead a peaceful life in the future.

Dr. John Devavaram organizer cooperation of partners (COP) an international forum for addressing climate crisis was one of the resource persons. He highlighted about the emission of green house gases and as villages how can they reduce the greenhouse gases. Mr. Balasubramanian Project Director, of NGO works on organic farming explained about the importance of minor millets and the role of farmers in involving in organic farming. The Project Director of SPEECH insisted about the role of community based organisation in mitigating the issue of climate crisis. At the end of the seminar the Program Coordinator distributed seedlings to the participants. After the seminar all the participants have planted seedlings at their homesteads as well in their lands which is a positive step taken as a part of mitigating the climate crisis. However one question remains unanswered

WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE OF NORTH IN ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CRISIS  
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**ASSERTAINING CHILD RIGHTS THROUGH CULTURAL EVENTS**

Retrieving hopes for childrights program aims at restoring the rights of children in families,communities,schools and wherever they are in .To make this statement true essentially the parents/adults should be prepared to loose their power and give children the basic rights.However the ego does not permit to give rights to children hence a gap is established between children and adults.If the adults are told directly to give up their ego their tendency/attitude may not allow them to do so though they understand very well about the basic rights of children.SPEECH with its strong commitment to provide rights for children follows specific strategies to convince the adult without curtailing their ego.One such was cultural events conducted for children to ascertain their rights.The cultural event not only provided opportunity for the children to bring out their hidden talents but also to ascertain power,managerial capacity,express view with fullest spirit and boldness peer group co-ordination,competitive spirit, and to achieve the goal.Cultural program is a cross cutting theme to establish developmental and participatory right .For an ordinary person performing a cultural activity may be an event but if we look in terms of child rights perspective one could easily

understand how it gives avenues for ensuring development and participatory rights.

At the event of children's day November 14<sup>th</sup> the sponsored as well non sponsored children from 14 villages were given chance to bring out their hidden talents. Events like dance (solo and group) folk dances such as karagattam, kolattam, oyilattam, debate, mimicry, jokes, poetry, singing (solo, group) and oratorical contests were effectively performed by 296 children. For every performance they fixed up themes related to child rights, patriotism, nutrition, special children, water harvesting and global warming has been the prime highlight of that event. Adding to that the whole day event was chaired and led by a girl of keelapatti. 26 CRPC members were present for the whole program who took care of several responsibilities. Back in the villages all the CRPCs took active role in selection of children for events, selecting the events theme setting, rehearsal, arranging transport facility, and preparation of lunch for the children. In order to encourage the children, gifts and certificate of participation were given to each child. The children have definitely improved their talents, established rights and ascertained power. This is just a beginning but still a long way to go to achieve the goal of children enjoying the childhood rights.

## PROVISIONAL RIGHT TO CHILDREN THROUGH POTABLE DRINKING WATER PROGRAM

As per United Nations Child Rights convention- UNCRC all the children should be given Survival,Development,Protection and Participatory rights. Rights to Survival and development essentially have to be provided by the Government as a primary stakeholder and family as secondary stakeholder.Hence both the rights are combined together and called as Provisional right.Here is a success story – children of Chellaiyapuram enjoy provisional right through potable drinking water program implemented in partnership with CCFCanada /Manulife financial Canada.

Chellaiyapuram is one of the target villages of SPEECH situated in a remote corner of the block lacks all basic facilities. Availability of adequate drinking water is the crucial issue because of salinity of ground water. Lack of rain water harvesting structures in the village and also the frequent monsoon failure intensify the scarcity of water and the people found it very difficult to cope up with the situation.



They had to go more than 3 kms to fetch potable drinking water. Children suffered out of diseases due to lack of potable drinking water .Girl children are forced to fetch water and because of this school dropout among girls has been a serious issue. Around 4000 children die every day from illness caused by poor quality

drinking water are in adequate hygiene practice in universe.88% of deaths attributed towards water problems. Chellaiyapuram is no way exceptional from this.Insufficiency of clean water even for washing hands is basically link to spread of diseases like intestinal worms that infect many children and increase their vulnerability to malnutrition and anemia. The impact of water on health and survival of children and women is enormous. It is estimated approximately 25% of the diarrhoea cases would be reduced if drinking water is available .However the most prevalent disease in Chellaiyapuram is diarrhoea because of lack of clean water .In many villages of SPEECH as operational area having clean water nearby ,are toilet facility and clean sanitation is only a dream.



Almost all the families of Chellaiyapuram have to walk 3 kms to access clean water and moreover the task of collecting water for the whole family is mostly delegated to women and girls. Ofcourse water is a right and has to be guaranteed to the civil society and it is the moral obligation of the government. Nevertheless due

to several reasons clean drinking water is not made available to the general public .Few years back because of the pressure applied by the people of the Chellaiyapuram to the local government an over head tank with the quantity of 10,000 ltrs and water was lifted from under community well water distribution scheme. Through which water was pumped for 1 to 3 hrs which does not match the needs of the community .No committee has also been constituted to monitor the distribution of water.As a result unnecessary quarrels has been a routine in Chellaiyapuram

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The issue being very crucial and felt need of everyone it has been well understood by the whole community .Though the severity was felt only the women, brought out the issue when they attended child rights protection committee meeting .Eventually the same has been endorsed by the children in children get together and health club meetings. On understanding the impacts of inadequate quantity of clean drinking water SPEECH organised village meeting where in the whole village was present. Representatives from local government, women groups, traditional leadership system and children group expressed about the need of the drinking water project. Consecutive meetings are organised to work out clear cut strategy of implementation .A monitoring committee comprised of 8 members (3 men,3 women and 2 youth)has been constituted to implement the project effectively. They were actively involved in site selection,

procurement of materials, fixing up contractor, arranging unskilled labours and collecting local contribution.

For several years the drinking water issue remained unresolved either by local /state government .However the children have put a full stop by influencing CRPC committee as well SPEECH to implement community drinking water project with the great support of CCFCanada .As of now beyond children the whole community is enjoying potable drinking water.

- Attitudinal change among the adults to give priority to children is seen as a positive note.
- Children are relieved from fetching water attending in a long que and they are sent to school on time regularly.
- Fortunately this year the monsoon started in time and the Chellaiyapuram pond is full.During the season the people of Chellaiyapuram used to drink water collected in the tank and because of that waterborne diseases used to be very common.But through community drinking water project safe/potable drinking water is supplied in surplus totally avoided waterborne diseases among the children and the general public of Chellaiyapuram.

## *I AM HONOURED.....*



I am Thirupathi residing in a one of the SPEECH's operational villages called Udaiyanampatti. I am from a dalit family and as the dalits undergo discrimination I also have experienced several atrocities in my village itself by the people of backward community. Though my father is a renowned palm reader our family is not well accepted I never lost hope and kept on trying to equip myself so that I can break the social barriers I completed my school final and got license for transport conductor and I was working as part time conductor. Slowly I learnt the technique of palm reading from my father and started using it for others. In spite of that I could not thrash out the disparity shown towards me. I was in great agony and several times cursed my parents for having given birth of myself in a dalit family. I had very big challenge and thirst to overcome this situation. As everyone believes that if there is WILL there will be a WAY and that has become true in my life. Because of the strong WILL I had to bulldoze the social discrimination I found the way through

providing services for the small animals in my village and in the neighboring places. I was one of the participants selected by SPEECH to undergo training on treating, immunizing and de-worming small animals .The farmers irrespective of caste they belong when their animals suffer they come to my door steps and take me to treat their animals .This is a great change as for us myself is concerned because I was not at all allowed to walk into their streets and treated very inhumanly.



Nevertheless the technique I learnt from SPEECH has given me a very face value and I AM VERY MUCH HONOURED . Alongside I earn an average of Rs 2000 from this sort of service providing job .Of course this is an additional income for me to give best education to my children .My sincere and heartfelt thanks to SPEECH and CCFC for having given me this opportunity. An unworthy and untouchable is lifted and regarded by others is mainly because of the training I got from SPEECH.

**CHILD PARTICIPATION – PALAR PANCHAYAT AN INSTRUMENT TO PRACTISE  
GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Indian constitution provides great opportunity to exercise rights by way of casting of our valuable votes. Though principles of democracy talk about people's empowerment by the people, for the people and of the people, the spirit of democracy is not well practiced due to several reasons. Political strength, wealth, caste, corruption, commercial power gaining politics plays a major role in deteriorating the real enthusiasm of democracy in India. The red tapism, corruption, alienate the deprived, vulnerable communities from mainstream political system. But it is true that one cannot escape from voting and ruled by political parties. Only the powerful person can enter into active politics and won in the election. Around 60 % of the voters do not know their roles, rights as Indian citizens in which many people do not bother about anything. Influence of money, alcohol and petty pleasures exploit the voters and take away their rights. Hence in every election good leaders are not elected. And another fact is that in every election 20% of voters come as new entrant from adolescent sector. As new members they do not know how to elect good leaders and they are often influenced by adults. On experiencing these issues SPEECH wanted to teach the adolescent children about democratic principles, good governance and to elect good leaders so that the real power building process will come true. As an organization concerned towards child rights protection SPEECH started imparting trainings to children between the age of 13-18 yrs with definite modules. Since the Panchayat raj institutions are functioning from 1993 the children can at least be elected in

the Panchayat level as ward members, presidents and counselors if they are taught properly. In the month of January, Palar panchayat election was conducted in Vedanatham panchayat covering three villages-Vedanatham, Keelapatti and Thammanayakanpatti. 101 children between the age of 13-18 years were selected and divided as 3 wards. As next step the children were exposed to Panchayat raj act, Panchayat system, election process, palarpanchayat administrative structure, eligibility for contestants, voters, gramasabha and down top planning. Further they were provided with Identity cards by election commission formed under the leadership of regular Panchayat president. Election process such as nomination, with drawl, symbol allocation, election campaign, and conducting election were totally managed by the election commission constituted at the panchayat level. At the end of January, Vedanatham palar panchayat election was conducted in which 98 children casted their votes out of 101 voters. Nagarajan of Keelapatti has been elected as President, 3 male and 4 female children were also elected as ward members. soon after the swearing on ceremony elected members along with the voters designed activities to ensure child rights. With in the tenure they will complete the planned activities. The palar panchayat election has expanded their rights decision making and administrative capacity of children. When the children were not allowed to take part in an event, take decisions and to exercise their rights, the palar panchayat has been an instrument to ensure child participation.

## LIGHTING THE LAMP OF EDUCATION

“EDUCATION SHOULD AIM AT DISPELLING THE MIST OF IGNORANCE”-GANDHIJI. Indeed our National leaders were quite enthusiastic to create awareness among the rural masses since most chunk of the population was illiterate. Right from that time several steps have been seriously taken to educate the people but the results were not appalling .Considering the factual conditions that hamper education. Government as a very big development instrument introduced so many schemes to promote literacy and formal education. For varied reasons rate of literacy percentage has not been increased till today.Dropout in the rural areas is so common. Thiruchuli which is located 35 kms away from the district head quarters is also under the clutches of illiteracy. Remoteness is one of the basic reasons for that. Other factors that contribute to illiteracy and school dropout are the industrial growth ,lack of permanent livelihood systems and poverty, frequent monsoon failure and low agriculture production absence of quality education in government schools ,cultural superstitious and gender discrimination. Having seen the children sent to textile industries and other abuses they undergo SPEECH has been involved in restoring the rights of deprived children with the partnership of CCFC.A campaign was organized in association with Udaiyanampatti. Government High school, CRPC, Palar Panchayat and the local of Udaiyanampatti.27 campaigners including 4 CRPC, 2 teachers, 2 palar panchayat, 4 cultural team members and 15 village elders involved in school enrollment campaign. Though Sarva Siksha Abiyan Scheme is implemented in Thiruchuli block the education department does not concentrate much on children enrollment. The trend of sending the children to textile industries is on the higher side. Apart from the local industries, girl children are sent to work as contract

“Sumangali”.As per the statistics of SPECH 13 such children are sent to sumangali scheme per village .Local middle persons play a vital. Lacks of permanent employment, lavish expenditure on rituals push the families to economic crisis and ultimately the children fall as victims.



The campaign team expressed the importance of education and also the rights of children. The campaigners met around 3600 families within a radius of 10 kms. As a result 17 children have been admitted in Udaiyanampatti Government High school who were about to become child labourers .This has been possible only because of the involvement of all stakeholders concerned.

### **IDEA TURNED IN TO ACTION**

My name is Veerammal and I live in a village called Othaveedu, Thiruchuli of virudhunagar district .I am an illiterate woman got married to Mr.Rajendran, 17 years back and I got 2 sons. I and my husband do not possess any assets and we work as agriculture coolies. Because of my saving habit and the motivation got from SPEECH staff I joined Nanayam group .The status of us without even piece of land has been gossiped by many of my relatives and neighbours. With painful

heart I have slept many nights because of such teasing. I took that as challenge and saved around Rs.25, 000 got the loan of Rs.15000 from Nanayam group and purchased a house site. But I could not register the land because of scarcity of money. At last my mother gave me goat as gift and I carefully reared it



.To my surprise the goat gave birth 3 male kits and after 3 months I sold those goats for Rs.9000/- and got registered the house site in my name. As soon as I got the asset through the goats I was quite interested and impressed about rearing goats. The people who were teasing me started maintaining good relationship and I am well accepted in the group as well in the village.

The time passed by I got an opportunity from SPEECH/CCFC - RHCR program for goat rearing .I am one of the partners of MED of SPEECH/CCFC got an assistance of Rs.5000/-. My husband purchased a pregnant goat and a female kid for Rs.6500/- .Everybody in the village again started gossiping on seeing the quality of the goat. But we never lost hope .The care we extended and feed we offered were quite extraordinary .After 3 months a particular, peculiar goat in the site of our village people gave birth 5 male offsprings .It was quite surprising for us .We put in lot of efforts to save all the kids.As of now all the kids are grown and in healthy condition. We have taken decision to grow those goats in a proper manner to another couple of years until my son completes his schooling. After that

we will those animals worth of Rs.50, 000/- and to use the same for my son college education. I being an illiterate woman teased by my own relatives, have developed /empowered only because of support of SPEECH/CCFC program. Let your service continue to lift up many under privileged families like us.

**PARKATHA PAYIR PAALL (Land/crop which is not visited / monitored regularly is a loss)**

The statement given us title is an ancient Tamil proverb and on experiencing everything .The old people have coined proverbs like this. Meaning a farmer should go to his/her farm field everyday to take good yield out of that. Of course nature is a wealth too every living beings when it is properly conserved, maintained and used .Historically speaking at one point of time farmers were using the land excessively and grabbed the maximum. When time passed by because of the climatic condition due to greediness of human beings they were not able to take returns from the lands.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats for human security especially safe feature for children. Children led ecological farming is an attempt to reduce the risk and vulnerability of children due to climate change. In this program the children are provided opportunity on soil and water conservation ,integrated food production, organic farming including using ,vermin compost ,cultivation of traditional millets, pulses, cereals, herbal plants and vegetables by way of providing small piece of lands for their own experiences and demonstrations. This program is not totally aimed at food security and food sovereignty but inculcating practice of farming which is life line for every child. With the growing trend in technology and science even the village farmers want to send their children to engineering and medical courses .SPEECH as development organization does not

say the aspiration of the parents is wrong. However it feels that an orientation to children on using their own lands is a must to lead a practical life. Major goal of this project – Children led ecological farming is to establish a workable model led by children to ensure food security and make the earth livable through learning good governance traditional agricultural practices and have concern for climate justice. 15 poor children from the target area were selected and trained on impacts of global warming on children and also the necessity for conserving the land and water. In addition they were also exposed on community farming growing traditional forgotten varieties of pulses, cereals and millets. A piece of land has been leased on and divided into 15 plots so that each child can establish ownership on the land. Land clearance, ploughing, field bunding, application of organic manure, supply of traditional seeds were extended by SPEECH.



The children were never allowed to go to the demonstration plot during the school timing they were allowed to go only on holidays and in the evenings .Almost the children visited the land once in a couple of days. They were fortunate to have regular rains since they started the activity .Over a period of three months they were able to cultivate /harvest vegetables and millets. The particular patch of land now seems to be fertile and productive because of the close watch and involvement of the children .The face of the barren land is totally changed and this has been possible because of only the involvement of children under the guidance of

SPEECH/CCFC .If it is replicated the whole Indian populations food security will be ensured.

### **DIVERSIFIED LIVELIHOOD OPTION**

Ajith kumar – Navaiah holds the ID.No 01115918 hails from a very remote village called Keelapatti, Virudhunagar, and Tamilnadu of India. He is aged of 12 years and studying 7<sup>th</sup> standard in government school nearby his village. His father is engaged in firewood cutting and mother Subbulakshmi is daily wage labourer .Ajith has 2 siblings and both of them are studying. His eldest brother is in 10<sup>th</sup> standard and elder sister studies 9<sup>th</sup> class. Ajith as a sponsored child has enjoyed several benefits from the project through CCFC in particular he has received CDG's for five times. Dress materials, kitchen utensils, bed sheet, have been very useful to him and the whole family. When individual toilet construction project was introduced Ajith's family was one among the beneficiaries .Both his father and mother underwent capacity building sessions on key issues like child rights protection, conservation of natural resources, animal husbandry and community mobilization on social issues .To improve the income of the family CCFC/SPEECH has provided a pair of goats worth of Rs.10,000/- .SPEECH operates on a three tier approach to bring in sustainable change in lives of vulnerable communities. While concentrating on to protect the rights of the children SPEECH simultaneously empowers the family through development interventions and sensitizes the community through community development activities. On a holistic basis it

strives to achieve best results with the greatest support of CCFC. Ajith's village Keelapatti is privileged to be part of CCFC support and through CCFC an irrigation tank was desilted to hold more water. In order children and youth to improve the knowledge a library was established .First of all the family members of Ajith and community have changed their attitude and started providing rights to children. Originally Ajith's brother and sister were about being dropped from the school, but because of the intervention of SPEECH/CCFC they are being sent to school regularly. Before introducing individual toilet Ajith family was using open place for defecation and now that the family health is maintained properly without any communicable diseases. The goat rearing assistance has supplemented by family income and asset value of goats is increased. Because of this Ajith parents are considered to be trustworthy to extend any amount of loan. Opportunities provided by the project/CCFC to the children have boosted up their self esteem, confidence and molded their values to be good citizens of the universe.

Ajith family lives in a village called Keelapatti district of Virudhunagar, Tamilnadu state. His house is tiled roofed with mud wall has two roofs and all his family members sleep on mats in the main hall. Ajith, his brother and sisters do not work as labourers, however they extend their support to his parents in completing family chores. Mostly the children go for shopping, cleaning the house, feeding the goats, washing clothes, vessels, fetching water, collecting firewood, cleaning goat sheds and assist mother in cooking.

Ajith family receive the pair of goats from gift catalogue .Parents did not have permanent employment and income with three children the family found difficult to feed them, give them good education, recreation and extend proper health care because of the economic backwardness .The involvement of Ajith mother in self help group and other social issues taken up by the people's organization was an added criteria for the selection. As for as Thiruchuli is concern goat rearing is the best alternate livelihood option than agriculture. The family of Ajith has a plan of doing the program as a fulltime job by increasing the member of goats by 25 within a span of three years. Of course daily income may not be possible. Nevertheless once in 6 months they could sell the male kids through which the family could earn a bulk amount of Rs.3000/-per kid.

Once the member is increased and Ajith mother or father will be full timer and they don't want to depend upon others for their livelihood. Milk will be used and also sold which again will fetch income to the family .Goat droppings are very good manure and it has got a great demand among the organic farming practitioners. Obviously that again an income source for the families. Ultimately the health, education, will be benefitted because goat droppings have now become a rare commodity. For purchase of goats and meat the people have to travel not less than 30 kms from Ajith village .Over a period of time the community would not face such problem. Before this Ajith were managing their routine with the wage earn out of the odd jobs they got and took loan from self help group and also from money lenders.



This is the first time for Ajith family to receive gift catalogue. As of now Ajith family has got 6 goats 2 adult and 4 kids worth of Rs.30000/- even with the shorter span of time. The amount has multiplied thrice and it will go on like this. In one year time they will have 12 goats worth of Rs.60, 000/- and the same will be used for the children.

### **'COMPLAINT BOX' – CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISM**

Children everywhere are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by those in positions of power and trust. This statement itself reveals how a child lacks protection in family and community .The protection right enshrined in UNCRC highlights about protecting children from all sorts of exploitation, abuses, cruel treatment, and neglect and abduction .Based on the outcome of the UN convention several laws were formulated in India. But for varied reasons effective enforcement is not in place hence child rights violations, atrocities, harassments demonstrated by mostly the adults. As for as Thiruchuli is concerned child labour,contract labour system, early marriage ,child trafficking ,school dropout, domestic violence ,sexual abuse, malnutrition/under nutrition are the common child rights violations.

Children being young they are not able to reveal about the tortures they undergo to anyone. Psychologically the abused children are under tension, submissiveness, inferior and by parents, teachers, owners and community leaders does not permit children to even share with friends. The space created by SPEECH for children to come together have provided them confidence to share any form of violations happened either at home/school/working places. Besides this the sensitization given about the basic rights of children to the parents, the motivation rendered to the committee to deal with CR violations are the basic shields for protecting the rights of children. However the violations are still existing in a subtle way. Having experienced this SPEECH has come out with an innovative idea of installing a complaint box in every target village so that the children, CRPC and general public can make a written complaint about any CR violations happen in the villages. Since the box is kept in a public place with lock and key anybody in the village can access that. The box is opened once in fortnight in front of CRPC members in which 2 children are part of that. The issues written in the complaint are talked in the CRPC and fair decisions are taken in favour of children. Sometimes sensitive issues are handled separately /secretly. Then on the spot problem solving process is done without any prejudice and in a democratic way. Hence it builds up confidence level as well act as a community shield to protect the rights of children. So far 41 complaints have been received from 19 villages and 40 % of the complaints are dealt by the child rights protection committees. There were times the children could not even express their violations but the complaint mechanism available at their easy reach, The confidentiality maintained by CRPC, the awareness created among the general public are the factors contributing child protection.



One of the complaints was about teasing/torture by a neighboring village by to an adolescent girl when she goes for school every day. She was about to be hit by motorcycle when the particular girl scolded the boy. This issue/incident was written and put in the complaint box. On seeing this CRPC members discussed among themselves and a team of people went and informed the boy's parents in a passive way. Now that the issue is solved and the particular girl feels happy and going to school without any disturbance .Likewise the rights violations of children are brought out/heard/handled very easily through simple complaint mechanism.

## AMBASSADORS FOR HEALTH



Young doctor treating a patient



Poster campaign by HC member



CRPC distributing First aid kit to HC

Health is the base for life and in the rural areas very low priority is given for health. Many diseases occur due to poor environment sanitation, unbalanced diet, improper immunization and lack of curative facilities. Major diseases prevailing among the villages easily can be prevented by taking up serious measures. Nevertheless lack of awareness is the root for spreading of diseases. Amongst the children malnutrition, and poor personal hygiene, are the serious concerns. If they are oriented properly they will carry more than the adults. Aiming at building up peer pressure SPEECH has organized a children forum called Health club whose role will be concentrating personal hygiene, environment sanitation,

carrying out awareness campaigns, demonstrations and trainings. As of now 24 health clubs are formed with a membership of 240 children with equal proportion of gender ratio.

The health clubs have done several activities in the past starting with awareness on personal hygiene to assisting the Doctors who come for children medical checkup. During the last quarter there were some interesting events happened in health clubs. The health club members were used by the primary Health centre staff nurses to inform the National pulse polio camp conducted in February. The HC members rightly pointed out the houses where the children to be immunized. Interestingly, when child Mutheeswaran 3 years old of Kallumadam left at home at the day of Immunization, Arunpandi a HC member brought him to the centre for providing polio drops. All the HC has been provided with First aid kit.

In cithalakundu, Kabbadi tournament was organized by the village youth and they did not arrange for first aid. When a player was ignored the Health Club Members provided him first aid and he is alright now.

Another event was awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS by the health club members. They pasted posters in common places in all the villages. In that there is an emphasis that “living in HIV/AIDS free WORLD IS THE RIGHT OF CHILDREN” and adding to that advices for adults were also printed in. Of course the Health club not only ambassador for health of children but also for adults. Though they are little their thoughts, concepts, goals, visions, are really really big. Let us join together to promote such initiatives of children to see prosperity in our nation.

## TEAM WORK THE SECRET OF SUCCESS



Right from the inception SPEECH has been purposely involving the community members /focus groups right from the planning level. The development stakeholder's rights from day one so that exit will be so smooth over a period of time. The inclusive strategy is very essential for sustainable development, In addition the Participatory approach/methodology SPEECH follows has created tremendous impacts among the communities in terms of participatory development.They are moreover act as partners rather than spectators.In RHCR program also the focus group and other development stakeholders play a vital role in achieving best results.”**Handing over and taking over**” the responsibility towards empowering the target groups is the key for sustainable development .It is

the prime duty of NGO to hand over and the taking over responsibility hesitation, with full enthusiasm, and zeal, is the right of community. So for SPEECH has followed the strategy effectively and in the last quarter it has created several avenues for different stakeholders involved in child protection, to change their mindset, attitude and behavior and to sensitize the responsibility in protecting the rights of children.

The school teachers who are with the children most of the time more than the parents were called for seminar on child protection. 26 teachers and non-teaching staff were oriented on child rights violations in Virdhunagar district, basic child rights, National children policy and disaster preparedness. The focus emphasized on understanding children has been an eye opener for them. On the spot they have extended consent to provide rights to children. Subsequently they are so much cordial with our staff members.

- When watch dog committee was formed the teachers were part of the process and they nominated very efficient teachers for the committee.
- Whatever the student lists needed from the schools without any hesitation the teachers give to our staff.
- Punishing the children is totally controlled.
- The teachers extended fullest co-operation during programs conducted in schools such as DPP training, establishing children's park, drawing evacuation maps, establishing library in schools, and vegetable gardens.
- At the block level SPEECH's child protection initiatives are spoken when the teachers meet others at the time of teachers meeting.
- Simultaneously capacity building session for government health workers organized and imparted training on child rights. They also openly said many issues and come forward to build alliance with our CBO's. Unanimously the

health workers said that first of all we have rightly understood the age of children .i.e. 18 years.

- All of them said that they will deliver, vitamin, iron tablets and hygiene kit to health clubs and as said 2 health workers have already given to our children for distribution.
- They have agreed to attend CRPC meetings and use other CBO forum for health education classes and introducing government health schemes.
- 5 ANC women had chance to register their names for availing government benefits on the spot when Medical officer, Thiruchuli and District Health educator, Virudhunagar attended a seminar as resource persons organized in SPEECH office.
- Likewise the PRI members have agreed to include minutes about child protection in Panchayat resolutions
- Of course they are primary stakeholders in the village level and the PRI members have changed their attitude towards providing rights to children
- SPEECH feels that the participation stakeholders and the Team spirit of them are the secrets of success.

## **ROLE OF DUTY BEARERS TOWARDS EMPOWERING RIGHT HOLDERS**



While denial of child rights is wildly practiced a group of 71 members from child rights protection committees and children of cultural team engaged themselves in a campaign on child rights .For many people this may be merely a rural development tourism but for the child development activists this is seen as an instrument to create awareness about child rights to wider audience .Though SPEECH with the support of CCFC has been involved in child protection in Thiruchuli the reach out was not up to the mark. Considering the child rights violations and the children undergo abuses SPEECH wanted to intensively propagate the message of child rights to all the people in the target villages. When the idea was shared the CRPC members came forward to involve themselves in the awareness generating campaign on child rights. At the event of campaign all the 57 campaigners assembled in SPEECH office Thiruchuli .In the preparatory meeting strategic plan was evolved and the vernacular materials on child rights was distributed .Cultural team members consists of children were also the companions of campaign .



The first team covered 14 villages and finally a public meeting was organized in Kethanayakanpatti where early and compelled marriages, alcoholism, eve teasing, child labour issues are still prevailing. Vairavasamy member of CMCJ was the chair person and children staged several cultural activities focusing on child rights. Mr. Nirmal Raja and Mrs. Karpagavalli from child development activist forum were the special invitees.



The second team covered 10 villages finally they had public meeting at Kallumadam, Mr. Rajkumar, CMCJ member was the chair person. The panchayat president Mr. Perumal, Mr. Muniaraj from CRPC delivered special lectures on child rights. The attendants were motivated to provide rights as duty bearers at the same time they also emphasized that children are the rights holders. As a result 3 children who were about to be dropped after 10<sup>th</sup> standard were admitted in 11<sup>th</sup> standard. As said in the beginning the campaign has reached the unreachable and even the people living in the remote villages have understood the basic principles of child rights. Providing rights is basically related to losing the power of individual hence consecutive stress on child rights should be given to change the supreme attitude of the adults.

