

BASELINE SURVEY: STATUS OF CHILD RIGHTS IN BANASKANTHA DISTRICT

Executive summary:

Based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959, India has adopted the National Policy on Children in 1974, which has reaffirmed the constitutional provisions and stated that “it shall be the policy of the State to provide adequate services to children, both before and after birth and through the period of growth to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. The State shall progressively increase the scope of such services so that within a reasonable time all children in the country enjoy optimum conditions for their balanced growth”. The Government of India has ratified the ‘Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (CRC) on the 11th of December 1992 as a member country and as a signatory to this convention.

Indian Constitution provides a comprehensive understanding of child rights along with fairly comprehensive legal regime exists for their implementation through laws for betterment of children in the country, such as Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; Child Marriage Prevention Act, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000, etc.; national plans for human resource development and Five Year Plans have provided the wherewithal to deal with child related issues. The thrust in defining child rights is that each child is allowed to do activities that make her/his life happy, healthy and safe along with responsibilities towards other children and adults, to make sure they get their rights.

Despite constitutional guarantees of opportunity and civil rights, millions of children face wide-spread deprivation and discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, ethnicity and religion. We hear children are dying of starvation, female sex ratio dips, little children, barely able to stand, are married off flouting all laws, many children are locked, abused, so demised - the list is endless. Even the basic need for birth registration that will assure them a nationality and identity remains un-addressed, affecting children’s rights to basic services, such as, health care, primary education, availability and accessibility to water, sanitation and safe environment that affect living conditions, protection from violence, trafficking and social stigmatization. A large part of this stems from being seen through the lens of adults who make decisions for them, and who prefer to address their welfare rather than their rights.

Various individuals, groups and non-government organizations (NGOs) working with and for children feel that the process of ratifying CRC is gaining formal recognition, there is, however, no universal or accepted definition of child participation and each one has defined it according to their own understanding. There is still a fairly long journey before this ‘inclusion’ of children’s participation is internalized and accepted widely.

Important points

- ☞ It is important that Indian government recognizes rights of children rather than mainly well-being through welfare approach. She needs to promote and protect rights as a positive social value. Therefore, the perspective of child rights requires to be child-centred, child friendly, not
- ☞ Any understanding of human rights of children cannot be confined to some children – ‘poor children’, ‘working children’ and ‘marginalized children’. Violations of children’s rights are not limited to the poor and downtrodden. They happen in middle class and elite homes too.

☞ A child born out of wedlock or of a void or illegal marriage is considered 'illegitimate'. Children pay for the decisions taken by the parents and are denied inheritance rights. Even worse, a child born of rape is stigmatized and treated as 'illegitimate', both by society and law.

Objectives of creating baseline data (BLD)

In the context of situation of rights of children, this study was initiated with the following objectives:

- a. To identify child related issues at regional level through baseline data (BLD);
- b. To plan future interventions based on BLD; and
- c. To continue working as CRY partners for child rights at regional level.

CRY in Gujarat works with various NGOs for intervention related to child rights, Behavioral Science Centre (BSC) is one of them. BSC works with 2 people's organizations (POs) in Banaskantha (BK) district, which is located in north Gujarat. The two POs are – (i) Adivasi Sarvangin Vikas Sangh (ASVS), and (ii) Banaskantha Dalit Sangathan (BDS). ASVS is active with adivasis (tribals) in one of the talukas, namely Danta and covers total 90 villages with 6 fellows (15 villages to be covered by a fellow - *parivartak*). BDS works in 5 taluka and 5 fellows in each taluka and thus covers 75 villages. In all 360 villages of 6 taluka are covered with by 26 fellows.

Research methodology for BLD

In order to know existing situation of child rights and to articulate child rights based on existing situation, we decided to collect primary data from two units – village and households (HHs), in addition to existing secondary data.

We have adopted 'purposive sampling' for selection of the villages in 6 taluka of Banaskantha district. The criteria for selection of the villages are as follow:

- a. To select villages with total population <1,500.
- b. Each village should have population of scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs).

In all 2 villages from each taluka – one village should be developed while the other is under-developed.

We decided to carry out a census in the selected villages, that is, all the households in the selected villages are covered under the survey. The 'purposive sampling' is drawn based on available resources, time and requirements for the future planning.

In the first stage, intensive discussion took place between CRY team, BSC staff, BDS officials and ASVS representatives on child rights to evolve a framework for common understanding on child rights. Later this framework was modified and adopted for the BLD. This framework is also an exhaustive list of suggestive indicators for child rights. Briefly we put the framework as shown in the following box.

Status of child rights – Survival, Development and Governance, Socialization and Protection	
Survival	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maternal Mortality Rate and Infant Mortality Rate b. ICDS – anganwadis and their activities c. Health care centre (government and/or private)

	d. For disabled children e. Access to Public Distribution System / Fair Price Shops
Development and Governance	a. Literacy level (enrolment and drop out rate) b. Primary Education and related facilities and support from the government (primary school, scholarship) c. Condition of disabled children
Socialization	a. Leadership b. Awareness of parents and children about various issues avenues
Protection	a. Gender discrimination (superstition, engagement in work) b. Legal provisions and its status in curbing child related issues (child labour, child abuse, addiction, child trafficking)

Based on this framework, we developed tools, namely scheduled questionnaire for village survey and household survey. The same framework was adopted for orientation of child rights and training *parivartak* (fellows) as well as pre-testing of the schedules.

The primary data has been collected during August and December 2005. Simultaneously data entry was started and got over by December 2005. The data cleaning took more than a month, as the collected data required cross-checking and classification for missing data and 'not applicable data'. Data analysis was undertaken in January 2006. The report writing was started and completed in February 2006, soon after data cleaning and analysis.

The survey was carried out at two levels – village and households. The number of household in a village and taluka mentioned here:

No.	Name of taluka	Social composition	No. of villages	No. of households
1	Danta	Tribal dominated	10	1,052
2	Dhanera	OBCs and Dalits	08	991
3	Palanpur	OBCs, dalits and Muslims	06	1,371
4	Tharad	OBCs, dalits and Muslims	08	1362
5	Vadgam	OBCs, Dalits and Muslims	08	1,074
6	Vav	OBCs and Dalits	08	1594
	Total		48	7,444

The village level survey has clarified major issues and therefore many of the issues are described based on village level data while some issues like economic status, sources of livelihood, level of awareness about child rights among parents, etc. are presented based on household data. These statistics therefore should be considered as guidelines.

Demographic data – Banaskantha district (Census 2001)

No	Meters	Banaskantha district		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Total Population	12,97,404 (55.8%)	12,06,840 (48.2%)	25,04,244
2.	Population (0-6 years)	2,45,654	2,22,740	4,68,394 (18.7%)
3.	SC Population	1,40,999	1,30,485	2,71,484 (10.8%)
4.	ST Population	1,05,818	1,00,086	2,05,904 (8.2%)
5.	Number of Literates (%)	6,99,080 (66.5%)	3,38,539 (34.4%)	10,37,619 (51%)
6.	Number of Illiterates (%)	5,98,324 (56.9 %)	8,68,301 (88.2%)	14,66,625 (72%)
7.	Sex Ratio	930		
8.	Sex Ratio (0-6)	907		

9.	Sex Ratio (SC)	925
10.	Sex Ratio (ST)	946

Over and above census data, major regional issues are briefly mentioned here in the human rights perspective.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF BLD

Profile of the respondents

- ↳ *Social composition:* Of total 7444, 19% belong to scheduled castes (SC), 18% belong to scheduled tribes (ST), 56% belong to OBC and of them 51% follow Hindu and the rest follow Islam and 6% belong to general category which means that they do not belong to either of the above four categories. Among them, Danta with being tribal dominated taluka has the least proportion of OBCs while Tharad leads with 76% OBC population followed by 61% in Vav and the least in Palanpur with 44%.
- ↳ *Education:* Broadly speaking, about a fourth (27%) has never gone to school for formal education, about a fourth (26%) have primary education and another a fourth of them (26%) have studied up to secondary. The graduates and postgraduates consist only 4% of the total respondents. Among illiterate respondents, half (51%) belong to Thanera s followed by one-third (37%) to Vav and about a fourth to (27%) Danta and the least in Vadgam (7.5%) taluka.
- ↳ *Occupation:* Majority of the respondents is engaged in cultivation (64%) followed by working as labourers (20%) and 8% are engaged as share croppers. Of the rest, are engaged as self employed (1.5%), job in private sector (1.8%), begging (1.5%) and a very small proportion (0.4%) have job in government run offices. There is no information about 2.5% of the total respondents.
 - Among different talukas, proportion of cultivators varies from 45 to 90% - highest in Danta followed by Dhanera, Vav and Tharad (about 65%) and least with 45% in Vadgam.
 - In case of labourers, the scenario is different - highest number of labourers are reported in Vadgam and Palanpur (about 35%), followed by Vav and Tharad and least with Danta taluka.