National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
5th & 2nd Floor, Chandralok Building, 36- Janpath New Delhi – 110001

Report of the Follow up visit to West Bengal on Child Trafficking & Adoption Racket

Report by:
Rupa Kapoor, Member, NCPCR

2016
List of Abbreviations

NCPCR………….National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
WSCPCR ............West Bengal State Commission for Protection of Child Rights
CID…………....Criminal Investigation Department
CDPO…………….Child Development Project Office
NGO…………....Non- governmental organization
ICPS…………....Integrated Child Protection Scheme
DM……………….District Magistrate
ASHA…………….Accredited Social Health Activist
DCPU…………… District Child Protection Unit
SDO……………… Sub Divisional Officer.
CPC………………Child Protection Committee
WLCPC………….Ward level Child Protection Committees
BDO………………Block Development Officer
VLCPC…………… Village level Child Protection Committees
VHNSC………….Village Health Sanitation & Nutrition Committee
CWC……………… Child Welfare Committee
Table of Content

1. Meet with CID Official on Child Trafficking & Adoption Racket Page-4
2. Visit to Barasat Children’s Home – Kishalay Page-4-5
3. Meet with Stakeholders at 24 Parganas (North) Page-6
4. Action taken by Department of Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal Page-6-8
5. Recommendation given by Member to improve situation in curbing trafficking and adoption racket of West Bengal Page-8
6. Child Friendly Pous Mela at Shantiniketan Page-9
7. NCPCR’s foray in Poush Mela Page-10
8. The Inauguration: Dignitaries Present: Page-11
10. Conclusion Page-15
Meet with CID Official on Child Trafficking & Adoption Racket at West Bengal

Member NCPCR met Mr. Rajesh for an update on the Child Trafficking and Adoption Racket at West Bengal. Mr. Rajesh informed that the case was still on and that no new arrests have been made by them. The CID personnel however suggested that NCPCR could provide support on this case and provide inputs on improving the situation. He said that the case suggests that there were links with other States. However the CID is linked to one State and could not make any arrests in other States. He said that each CID has its own Anti human trafficking unit, hence if NCPCR could conduct a meeting of all adjoining States on an update of their work on child trafficking a number of issues could be resolved and coordination among agencies for curbing trafficking could be reinforced.

Field Visits:

Team: Ms. Rupa Kapoor, Member NCPCR, Mr. Dibyendu, CDPO Kolkata, Ms. Chaitali Moitra, Member WBSCPCR

Visit to Barasat Children’s Home - Kishalay

Member visited the Government run Boy’s home at Barasat called ‘Kishalay’. Member met the Superintendent Mr. Moloy Chatterjee. He mentioned that the Home catered to about 129 children in the age group of 6-18 yrs. They are children in need of care and protection.

There is a school for junior children inside the premises. For senior children school is near the premises. There is also a small health centre in the premises.

Member visited the premises especially the living rooms, kitchen, dining space, recreation centres. The children performed some cultural programmes for the Member and the team. Later member also discussed with children their issues and their feelings about the Home. Children did not have any complaints to share they mostly discussed their ambitions.
The Home was relatively well maintained, neat and clean. Children were given proper clothes and footwear. Children indulged in a number of recreational activities like football and cricket. Children also learnt dancing, yoga and the art of puppetry and had done shows in WBSCPCR’s Annual function. There was a properly maintained playground. Children also participated in gardening and vocational trainings like mushroom cultivation and plumbing. Food given to children was of good quality. The walls of the home were brightly painted by the inmates which they shared was done after an art workshop.
The compound had a small pond which was ill maintained and quite dangerous for little children as there was a chance of them slipping and falling. Hence Member suggested that the area fencing be done.

**Meet with Stakeholders at 24 Parganas (North)**

In the previous visit in 29th November’16, Member enquired upon the child trafficking and adoption racket which initiated from North 24 Pargana District of West Bengal. Visits were made at Masalandpur village where the illegal racket was being conducted by an NGO and the Sohan Nursing Home from where newly born children were trafficked. In course of the meet with stakeholders from the DM’s office, Health Deptt., ICPS Deptt., Police, Childline, Dist. Social Welfare authorities etc, the Member had given certain recommendations for improving the situation of vigilance and prevention of such cases. Member had also given 20 days for giving an update on performance. Accordingly after 20 days Member NCPCR demanded for an action taken report from the authorities. The Police Deptt, Health Deptt. and the Social Welfare Department submitted their updates on the activities undertaken to improve the situation at North 24 Parganas. Member mentioned that these actions could be replicated in other Districts where similar problems had surfaced. Several awareness campaigns had been initiated in the schools and Nursing Homes had been scrutinised for license. In Sandeshkhali 3 schools were covered by the Police for awareness generation.

Since the number of private/illegitimate NGOs were not listed, it was difficult to get the complete picture. However activities had started in listing of NGOs. Member recommended that Village and Ward level committees were being formed and trained for monitoring purpose.

**Action taken by Department of Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal**

Some major initiatives for sensitizing the grassroots level workers and awareness programs for the community people were held after Member Rupa Kapoor visit to West Bengal. The activities undertaken are as below:

**Sensitization workshop**: 12 workshops were conducted in Baduria Block and Habra-1 Block from 16.12.2016 to 22.12.2016 for the ICDS, ASHA, School teachers, and other health workers working in the grass root level and coming in touch directly with the villagers and local leaders. The topic of the workshop was child rights and their roles. The workshop was facilitated by “Kao Katha Kao” a drama group. The workshop was attended by ADM (T), concerned SDOs, and DCPU staff members duly to ensure the participation of the members present.

**Strengthening CPC**: A district level workshop was organized by the order of Hon’ble DM, North 24 Parganas to discuss the current position of CPC and how to strengthen their
position. In the meeting all Govt and non Govt stakeholders were present. According to the discussion all WLCPC would be facilitated by SDO concerned and workshop would be organized to form all CPCs and continuation of CPC meeting. In the meeting few agendas were suggested by the Hon’ble DM, North 24 Parganas: (1) Mapping of Child Care institutions in the area to identify if any unauthorized home is running; (2) Mapping of unauthorized Nursing homes in the area; and (3) Is there any RMPs (Registered Medical Practitioner) are practicing without having license. And this would be reported to the District Authority immediately to take further action in this regard.

**Home Inspection:** Six District Level Inspection Teams would visit all the enlisted homes under the leadership of SDOs. And as per the reports submitted by the team, appropriate actions will be initiated against Homes.

**Child Rights Week:** During the 14th to 20th November, 2016 a week long child rights awareness program was celebrated throughout the district. The events were Rally by children, Drawing competition, Sports Quiz Competition etc. The children were also awarded with the token prizes one girl from our district has been awarded with state award for bravery. Special Child Rights Day is going to be celebrated throughout the District on 27th December, 2016.

**Workshop on CPC:** The Workshop on CPCs was planned in all Municipalities under the leadership of SDOs and at Blocks under the leadership of BDOs and was running to activate all the CPCs immediately. All data regarding homes, NGOs Nursing Homes would be shared with police administration and they must be a part of the inspection team as and when required. Checklist for CPC about child related issue is mentioned below:

a) Whether any child is missing (very Important).
b) Whether any child is engaged as child labor.
c) Whether any child is dropout from school.
d) Whether any child is engaged as bonded labor at domestic work.
e) To access and wide publicity of menaces of child marriage.
f) Awareness generating mechanism must be improved using visible IEC at Bus Stands, Market Place etc. and involvement of Folk artists for programs related to child protection, do’s and don’ts of pregnant women, institutional delivery.

**Police:** The Commissioner of Police Bidhan Nagar/Barrackpur and SP of Police, North 24 Parganas would involve one civic Volunteer for each VLCPC/WLCPC within their jurisdiction.

**Fixing date for CPC meeting:** It was informally guided that the composition of members for the fourth Saturday meeting of all GPs for the VHSNC community were nearly the same. So efforts may be taken by Block and GP to hold CPC meeting also the same day for all the following months. Similarly in Municipal area at fixed date like 2nd Tuesday may be fixed by chairperson of Municipality.
Special Child Rights Day: On 27th December, 2016 special Child Rights Day would be observed all over the district in all Blocks and Municipalities. Venue, Program and report of the program should have to be communicated to the District Administration well ahead, District level program will be held at Rabindra Bhavan Barasat.

Recommendation given by Member to improve situation in curbing trafficking and adoption racket of West Bengal

Suggestions shared by Member to Signboards on the punishments were already shared in recommendations of NCPCR.

Member also suggested that doctors from Government clinical establishments could also publicise their names and phone numbers, so that if any unmarried girl or woman wanted to deliver a baby secretly, it could be done by a registered medical practitioner instead of an untrained Doctor.

It was suggested that the idea of cradle policy where cradles could be placed outside Hospitals/ Nursing homes so that people who did not want the child could give up the child secretly for adoption to registered hospitals instead of illegal practitioners.

Members asked police personnel to visit villages and Nursing Homes in plain clothes to assess whether such illegal activities are being conducted.

Social Welfare Deptt. , Child line and CWC to develop young people as peer educators so that more awareness could be generated among the young people to not only indulge in illegal practices but also report cases.

All NGOs to be listed in the District records else be declared unauthorised after a certain period of time.

Police to set up more Child Friendly Police Stations so that young people could share concerns and such issues to the police directly.
Child Friendly Pous Mela at Shantiniketan

22\textsuperscript{nd} - 24\textsuperscript{th} Dec’16

About the Pous Mela

The Pous Mela is an annual fair and festival that takes place in Shantiniketan, in Birbhum District of West Bengal, marking the harvest season. Commencing on the 7th day of the month of Poush, the fair officially lasts for three days, although vendors stay until the month-end. The key characteristic of this fair includes live performances of Bengali folk music, notably the ‘Baul’ music.

Nobel Laureate Shri Rabindranath Tagore’s father Shri Devendranath Tagore initiated the Poush Utsav at Shantiniketan. A small fair was organised in December 1894. This small Poush Mela is now a large gathering that attracts International crowds as well.

The Mela is primarily an artistic and scholarly fair managed by the Visva Bharati University at Santiniketan.
NCPCR’s foray in Poush Mela

NCPCR drafted Guidelines on the child friendly initiatives that could be taken for any fairs, melas or gatherings in India. They were called the ‘Child Friendly Mela Guidelines’. To pilot this initiative NCPCR chose one large gathering-the Krishna Pushkaran Fair at Vijaywada and a relatively small fair of Pous Mela at Santiniketan.

In August’16, Member met the District Administration and mela authorities at Santiniketan to discuss whether the Pous Mela could be designed as a child friendly mela. Pous mela does not have cases of child missing or being trafficked but a large number of tribal and poor families came to sell their products. There were instances of child labour and child marriage in this mela along with child beggars. To make people aware of child rights and schemes related to children, member requested the authorities to consider developing certain aspects of the mela as child friendly.

In November’16 Member once again met the authorities to finalise the child friendly components of the mela. It was determined that the mela would have

- A child rights corner with different stalls on different schemes of the Government
- A child Rights desk for information
- Provision of a hand band with telephone numbers so that children do not go missing
- Volunteers with bright Jackets to trace children without hand bands and give support. Volunteers could be students who are trained by Child line
- Safe drinking water facilities
- Safe toilet facilities
- Police to develop a stall which would depict a child friendly police station
- Opportunity for children to express their views
- IEC materials across the District- in Bus-stands and Railway Stations for information on child friendly Pous Mela
- Emergency response/ disaster Management
- Provision of Ambulance and health safeguards
- Firefighting facilities
- Prevention of Child beggars, child labours: affidavit to be taken in advance from stalls not to employ child labours
- No child trafficking and missing

Member encouraged all Government Departments and NGOs to work in tandem and collect funds for applying these guidelines in the Mela. The District Administration took the task upon them and in coordination with Visva Bharati University planned to initiate some guidelines of the child friendly mela in Poush Mela. They also planned advocacy initiatives and measures to promote the child friendly mela.
There were several administrative and financial problems that the mela authorities and District authorities incurred. This was also the very first time that a concept like this was initiated in Bengal and in Santiniketan. However from 23rd December to 25th Dec’16, the authorities were able to set up a Child Friendly Pous Mela at Santiniketan, West Bengal’s first mela of this kind.

**The Inauguration: Dignitaries Present:**

Vice Chancellor, Visva Bharati University Shantiniketan; Chairperson and Technical experts from WBSCPCR; DM Birbhum, ADM Birbhum, Shabhadhipati Birbhum Zilla Parishad, Registrar Visva Bharati University Santiniketan; MLA Dubrajpur Birbhum; Sub Divisional Officer Birbhum’Sub Divisional Police Officer Bolpur, Birbhum,, Dy. Director Directorate of Child Rights & Trafficking Govt. Of West Bengal;
A Glimpse at the Child Friendly Pous Mela at Shantiniketan: 23rd-25th December 2016

A designated child Friendly Corner for children in the Mela

Stalls of different Government Departments and schemes related to children (ICDS, ICPS, Kanyashree, Special Juvenile Police Unit, Childline, etc.)

Games and recreational facilities

Special volunteers to track children
Handbands to track children
Child Friendly Toilet

Safe drinking water facility

Learning & fun activities
Cultural events by children on various social issues- child marriage, education, child labour etc.

Information centres on various schemes

Advocacy

Opinion Boards
Conclusion

The Child Friendly Pous Mela was very successful. It was a new concept and people were attracted to the child friendly corner especially children. They got a chance to draw, express their views through role plays, show their talents and also enjoy. All the facilities catered to the child rights concepts. The hand bands and volunteers prevented children from being missing. Total nine children were rescued by the District Child Protection team who were child labours.