

Join



Act

Speak

Join

Shanti Ashram, along with many other organizations, leaders and individuals, pioneered the people's movement for Panchayat Raj in Tamil Nadu. A strong hundred-member NGO alliance worked to prepare a conducive environment for the first Panchayat elections. Shanti Ashram's primary commitment of strengthening governance at the Panchayat level on constant and meaningful interaction with Panchayat leaders has also provided a unique opportunity for initiating innovative programs.

Speak

Most of the rural Panchayats, demographically still have children as a significant part of their constituency. There are particular reasons why working for rural children has to be a priority issue. Most children start off with the disadvantage of low birth weight and this experience of malnutrition continues well into childhood and adolescence. The burden of disease still stands high and close to 1/3rd of our children in rural areas suffer the insult of protein energy malnutrition. A primary need today is the creation of conducive environments for children that will ensure their holistic development. Overburdening of schoolwork, lack of recreational space and activity and long hours of work for parents, has meant there is a need for conscious engagement of the community in ensuring this space for holistic growth and learning.

Participating Panchayats

- Kalampalayam
- Somaiyampalayam
- Marudur
- Mathvarayapalayam
- Nachipalayam
- Valukuparai



Children in Tamil Nadu An Overview

• Share of Children in total population	13.3%
• Children with anaemia	69%
• Infant Mortality rate	52/1000
• Juvenile Sex ratio	939/1000
• Children with low birth weight	23%
• Under 3 moderately malnourished	13.4%
• Under 3 severely malnourished	3%
• Children with Vitamin A deficiency	2%
• Children out of school at 8th std	35%
• Schools with safe drinking water & Sanitation facilities	50%

Act

The rationale behind developing cooperation at the Panchayat level is centered on the need for intensive work that will ensure improved quality of life for rural children. Given the challenges involved in working for child protection, the chances of success are always increased by working in partnership. There are many different types of partners, all of whom may be able to contribute to a joint effort, on a specific child protection issue or more generally. Many Panchayats today have energetic and skilled leaders who are extremely concerned about child protection. Numerous examples of private sector organizations willing to work with others on child protection issues are also seen. Building coalitions, providing leadership and support and identifying opportunities for collaborations for child development, are all potential aspects of this collective work for children.

For Further info on Bala Sabhas, please contact :

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Bala Sabha

Building Child Friendly Panchayats



We reaffirm our obligation to take action to promote and protect the rights of each child - every human being below the age of 18 years, including adolescents. We are determined to respect their dignity and to secure the well being of all children...

A WORLD FIT FOR CHILDREN

unicef



SHANTI ASHRAM

Engage

Cooperate



Challenge

Change

Engage

INDIA, since independence, has pursued planned development to achieve economic growth with social justice. This strategy came into operation in 1951 with the initiation of the First Five-year Plan. There is a consensus today that micro level planning is critical to ensure a wider development base and people's participation. So organizing the Bala Sabhas and the preparatory work building up to this, will allow for the engagement of the following participants :

- Governance institutions including Panchayat leaders & the local MLA
- Local Health & Educational institutions
- CBOs particularly the Women's Self Help Groups
- Children's & Youth Groups
- Parent Teacher Association
- Lead NGO of the area engaged in Child Development

Cooperate

Mahatma Gandhi said that the development of India depends on the development of her villages. One of his dreams was "Gram Swaraj". To create this micro level administrative institution the Govt. of India passed the 73rd constitutional amendment in 1992, consequent to passing of the Panchayat Act by the states in the country. 30 lakh elected representatives today serve the nation through the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), one third of them being women. We have a new opportunity to improve children's lives through PRI.

Bala Sabha's

Building Child Friendly Panchayats



Why Children ? Why Bala Sabhas ?

Working for children and the potential for creating 'Child Friendly Panchayats' through BALA SABHAS have been part of the thematic discussion, both within the Ashram and with our Panchayat representatives. This unique opportunity allows us to explore collectively the possibility of working with and for 'Children.'

It has been recognized that work for children has to be integrated, for this is one of the most unique stages of human development. The impact of our commitment will be reflected sensitively on the growth and development experience of children, particularly in rural areas.

Challenge



Common Agenda for Action

We appreciate the funding support from the UNICEF state office for Tamilnadu and Kerala for the Bala Sabha Initiative



Seen at the Launch of the "Bala Sabha Initiative" : (L to R) - **Shri. Naresh Gupta**, Chief Election Commissioner, Tamilnadu, **Mrs. Minoti Aram**, President, Shanti Ashram, **Shri. Thomas George**, UNICEF office for Tamilnadu & Kerala and Presidents of the Participating Panchayats.

The programmatic focus of the Bala Sabha Initiative is built upon the experience of Shanti Ashram, the thematic areas where Panchayat leaders want to be engaged and receive feed back from local professionals including health care providers and educators. The programmatic focus will collate a "Common Agenda for Action."

Objectives

The specific objectives of the Bala Sabha are :

- To create awareness on child development at the Panchayat level
- To develop a shared agenda on children's needs through participatory rural appraisals
- To create awareness amongst children on Governance, PRI & Community Leadership
- To prepare an action plan for the participating Panchayats and a working interface with Children
- To promote the concept of BALA Sabhas or Children's Parliament in the Panchayats
- To document the process of building child friendly Panchayats through Bala Sabhas for evaluation & wider dissemination

