

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: CREATING CHILD-FRIENDLY VILLAGES TO PROMOTE CHILD RIGHTS

A Community Based
Approach to End
Child Exploitation
through Democratic
Participation at
the Grassroots



GLOBAL MARCH
Against Child Labour
Contra el Trabajo Infantil
Contre le Travail des Enfants

THE ISSUE

Millions of children across the world are toiling in work, often working in deplorable condition, denied of their childhood and basic rights to education, safety and leisure. Many are trafficked to work in slavery like conditions not only within their countries, but also across borders. Globally, as many as 168 million children continue to be engaged in child labour, with 85 million of them in work that is hazardous for their well-being and development (International Labour Organization, 2013). Further, as many as 263 million girls and boys across the world remain out-of-school, many of them too toiling in work (UNESCO, 2016).

Rural India, which still comprises of more than 60% of the total Indian population, is the largest exporter of trafficked children for child labour. The ILO estimates number of children working in India aged between 5-17 at 5.7 million out of 168 million globally. There are several reasons for this. Most important being - illiteracy and poverty which function as the push factors for people to consider seeking employment in urban India. It is also in the rural India where the education infrastructure is in its most dire state with dysfunctional schools and absent teachers, and where practices such as child marriage and irresponsible approach towards sanitation as well as environment conciseness exists. There is research that demonstrates that lack of educational opportunities functions as one of the factors that forces parents to choose sending their children to work and continue with old age practices that do not serve any meaning in the modern society.

On the other hand, Uganda even though was one of the first African countries to introduce Universal Primary Education (UPE), it has more than 2 million children aged from 5-17 years engaged in child labour which is about 16% of the entire population of 11.5 million children in Uganda. Children who are forced out of school to work as child labourers, work to help supplement income of their families and are thus denied the opportunity to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to aid them get decent employment in future leading to the poverty cycle. It is estimated that 93% of child labour in Uganda is employed in the primary sector encompassing agriculture, forestry and fishing. Moreover, even though UPE built schools, trained teachers and abolished tuition fees, nearly 1 in 20 school age children have never enrolled in school and Uganda has one of the highest percentages of school dropouts in the world making more and more children vulnerable to child labour, trafficking, slavery and other forms of violence against children. Child Labour in Uganda is most prevalent in orphan children or children whose one of the parents has died.

Government of India and Uganda have initiated various efforts to strengthen legislation, rehabilitation and protection of children. Families and communities being the closest institutions in a child's world, should be the first to be engaged constructively to ensure complete protection and promotion of children's rights. Thus, there is a need to strengthen families, communities and children themselves, to not only resolve the community problems but also adopt child centric development practices to protect children and empower them with enforceable knowledge on their fundamental human rights.



SOLUTION: CHILD FRIENDLY VILLAGES

Such problems are daunting for the governments and the civil societies all over the world, to tackle either by itself or collectively, without the active participation of the people. It is increasingly being realised that without active participation of children, women and men, policy and programme initiatives will not deliver, certainly not in any inclusive way. Participation of the target population helps in mobilising public awareness as well as building a strong sense of ownership of policies and programmes. It also creates greater transparency and accountability, holding responsible duty bearers on their promises. Such initiatives at the local level are also invaluable in bringing local issues, problems, aspirations and needs into sharper focus, so that indigenous fixes and organic solutions can be provided for them. Enabling such participation is also a means of empowering the marginalised groups as well as empowerment of children, keeping them at the center of all development activities.

It was in year 2001 when Nobel Peace Laureate 2014, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Founding Ex-Chairperson and Honorary President of Global March Against Child Labour, from his long and first-hand experience of rural India, understood that poverty was also the function of child labour and ending child labour requires comprehensive interventions tackling interconnected issues. Thus he conceptualised and operationalised a model called *Bal Mitra Gram*TM or Child Friendly Villages (CFV), that seeks to tackle the cyclical relationship between poverty, illiteracy and child labour.

The Child Friendly Villages look at child labour in a holistic way, as a symptom of the greater malaise affecting society, such as poverty, structural unemployment, gender discrimination and exploitation, non-availability of education, practice of social evils such as child marriage, environmental degradation, denial of access to natural resources, land inequality, migration, natural and human made disasters, development induced displacement, low wages for adult workers, lack of political will, communalism and caste discrimination, to mention a few.

The Child Friendly Village intervention was conceived as a social intervention within the wider social movement called *Bachpan Bachao Andolan* (or Save the Childhood Movement) in India, to embed child rights in rural communities across the country with intent to prevent child labour and trafficking of children for forced labour. The intervention was expected to achieve this change through withdrawal of children from work, ensuring their access to education and through a dramatic but visible structural change in people's relationship with children, by promoting child participation in villages' decision making process, resulting in protection of children in their communities and tangent development of the overall community.

After the glorious success of 524 Child Friendly Villages in India, Global March Against Child Labour (Global March) replicated this model in rural Uganda in 2015.

Global March partner in Nepal, Backward Society for Education (BASE) also implemented the model in Nepal.

In India since 2001

524 Total CFVs all India till date

295 CFVs handed over to communities

11,34,000 Total population outreach

6,50,000 Total children outreach

In Uganda since 2015

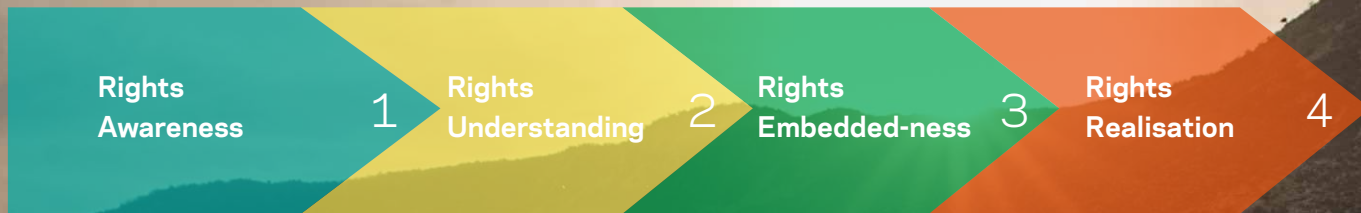
20 Total CFVs

1,200 children enrolled in schools

2,332 Total population outreach

PROCESS FLOW

Child Friendly Villages Rights Based Approach



Tools of Intervention



IDENTIFICATION OF VILLAGES

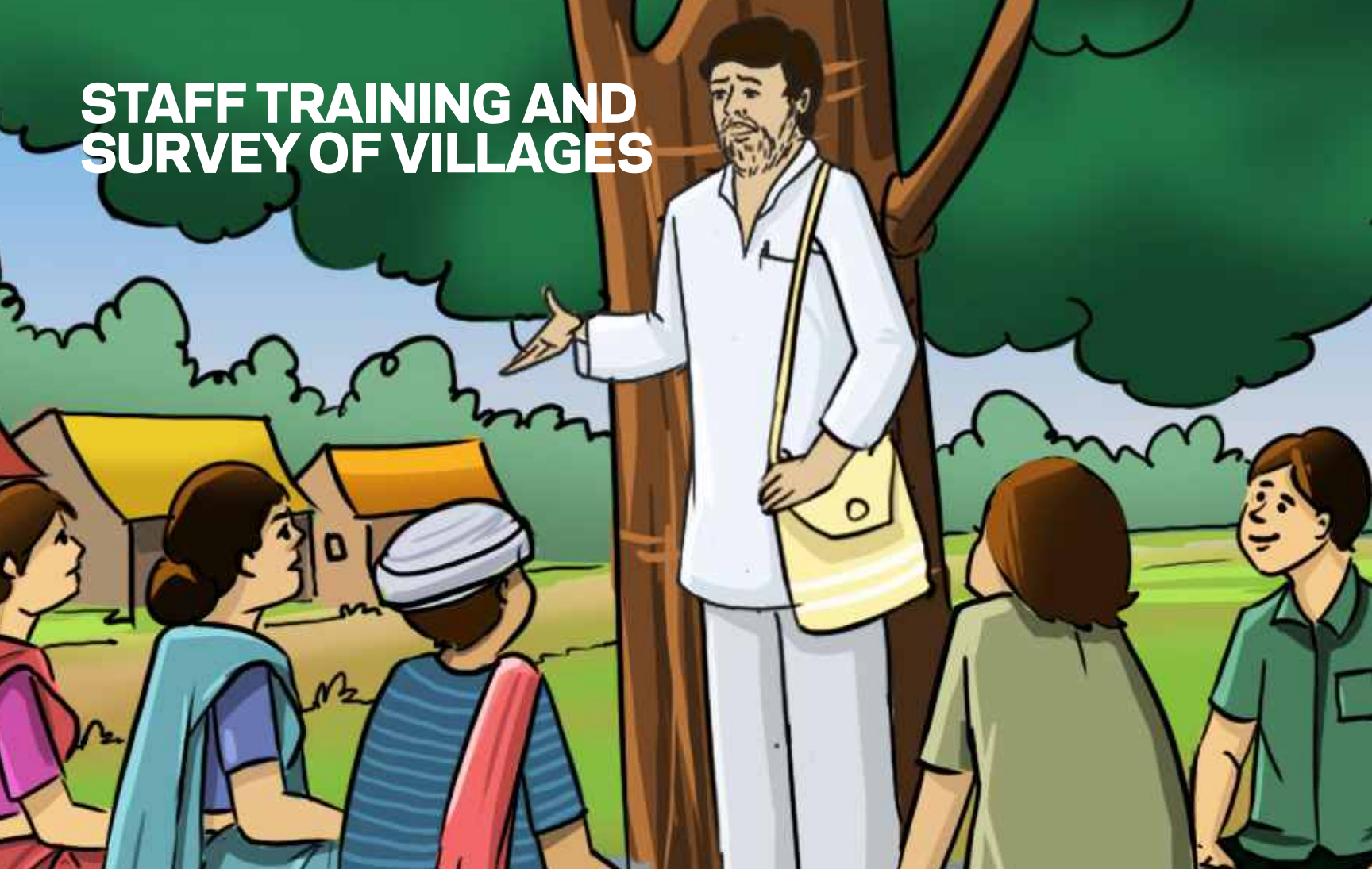
Identification of villages or an intervention area is dependent on the issue that the organisation wishes to address. For example, working on child marriages will necessarily mean working in areas where child marriage is a major concern. Nevertheless, at the core of the child friendly intervention, since child labour is a widespread phenomenon in rural India, the following criteria are used:

- Number of children engaged in economic activities/exploitative labour;
- Number of non-school-going children;
- Number of the people from the marginalised section of the society
- School and early learning infrastructure in the village

Based on the above mentioned criteria, villages which are child labour intensive and have the problem of out of school children are selected under the intervention. Addressing a challenge goes hand in hand with achieving a scale for intervention. Achieving a scale helps the intervention to retain the character of a social movement while at the same time increase the impact area multi fold.



STAFF TRAINING AND SURVEY OF VILLAGES



Once a geographical area is identified, the staffs hiring process begins in earnest. Since the entire intervention is based on engagement with the local communities, it is imperative that staff is hired from within the area where the intervention is located. Training for staff begins soon as they are hired and before extensive field engagement begins.

Once the training of staff is complete, they are asked to begin outreach activities in villages allocated to them. The base-line survey through the use of household forms is an important way for staff to engage with the entire village community.

A base-line survey of the each village is conducted to collect the relevant information about the socio-economic status, historical background and the developmental and educational strategies followed so far within a village. This data is then documented and analysed within the data management system of the organisation.

Since the intervention intends to bring behavioural changes in a community, it is also recommended to record such changes to augment assessment of the intervention at the closing stages.

WITHDRAWING CHILDREN FROM WORK

This step is the core for all child friendly village interventions irrespective of the area where it is delivered principally because child labour in rural India is a widespread phenomenon. In fact, a host of other child rights violations are linked to involvement of children in child labour.

However, unlike the activity description, it is the most challenging activity in a village since it begins to fundamentally challenge the power structures in a community as well as in a household. This is primarily because the staff is unable to ensure an end to child labour till the time households and community leaders are unwilling to take proactive steps to bring this to an end. It is also significant since the child friendly villages intervention is premised on community engagement leading to behavioural changes with minimal reliance on law enforcement. Therefore, it is natural for the organisation staff to face resistance from within the communities and households whose children face violations of their rights.

The staff on the ground seeks to address this challenge through a variety of ways and elaborate training and close supervision is required to ensure that first intervention in a community is supported by community leaders and elders.

Some of the specific activities include awareness campaigns including meetings with parents and community leaders, village council leaders, etc. Meetings with teachers are also held to enlist their support in removing children from labour and their enrolment in schools.







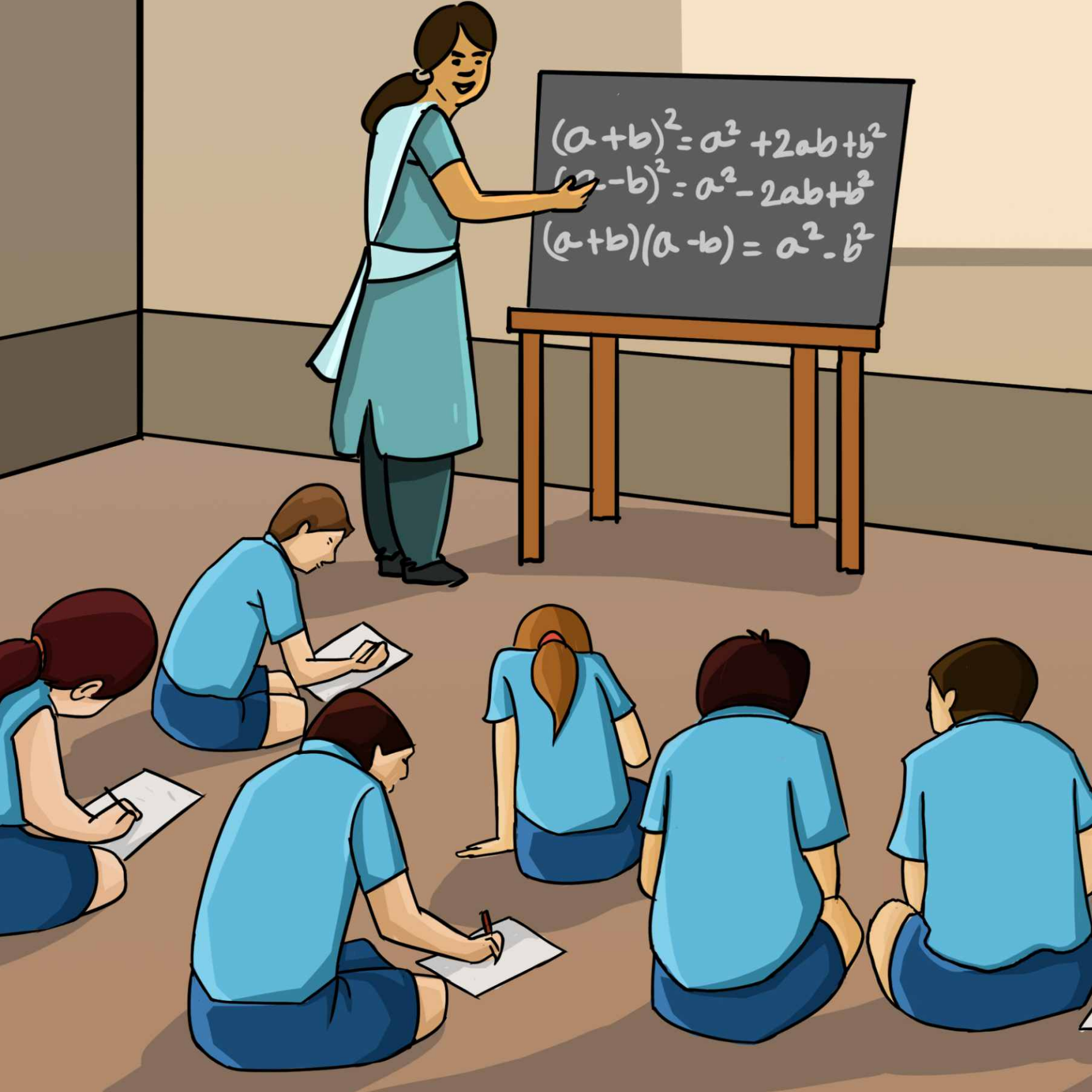
ENROLLING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

After withdrawal of children from school, the next challenge for the staff is to ensure their enrolment in schools. In addition, the staff also ensures enrolment of all out of school children in schools. This is done by intensive engagement work with parents and children through regular counselling, awareness raising and capacity building of community stakeholders as well as children.

In India, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 provides for compulsory enrolment of all children between the age of 6 and 14 years. However, there are certain grey areas where the respective state governments need to look into.

In Uganda, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) provides for basic education, guaranteeing access, equity, quality education which is affordable by the government and majority of people. Therefore there is a contribution by the parents and governments. However, due to prevalent poverty and lack of school feeding programmes, children remain out of school. The organisation staff in the villages thus work with the communities and provide scholastic support to children and ensure their enrollment and retention in schools.





$$(a+b)^2 = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$$

$$(a-b)^2 = a^2 - 2ab + b^2$$

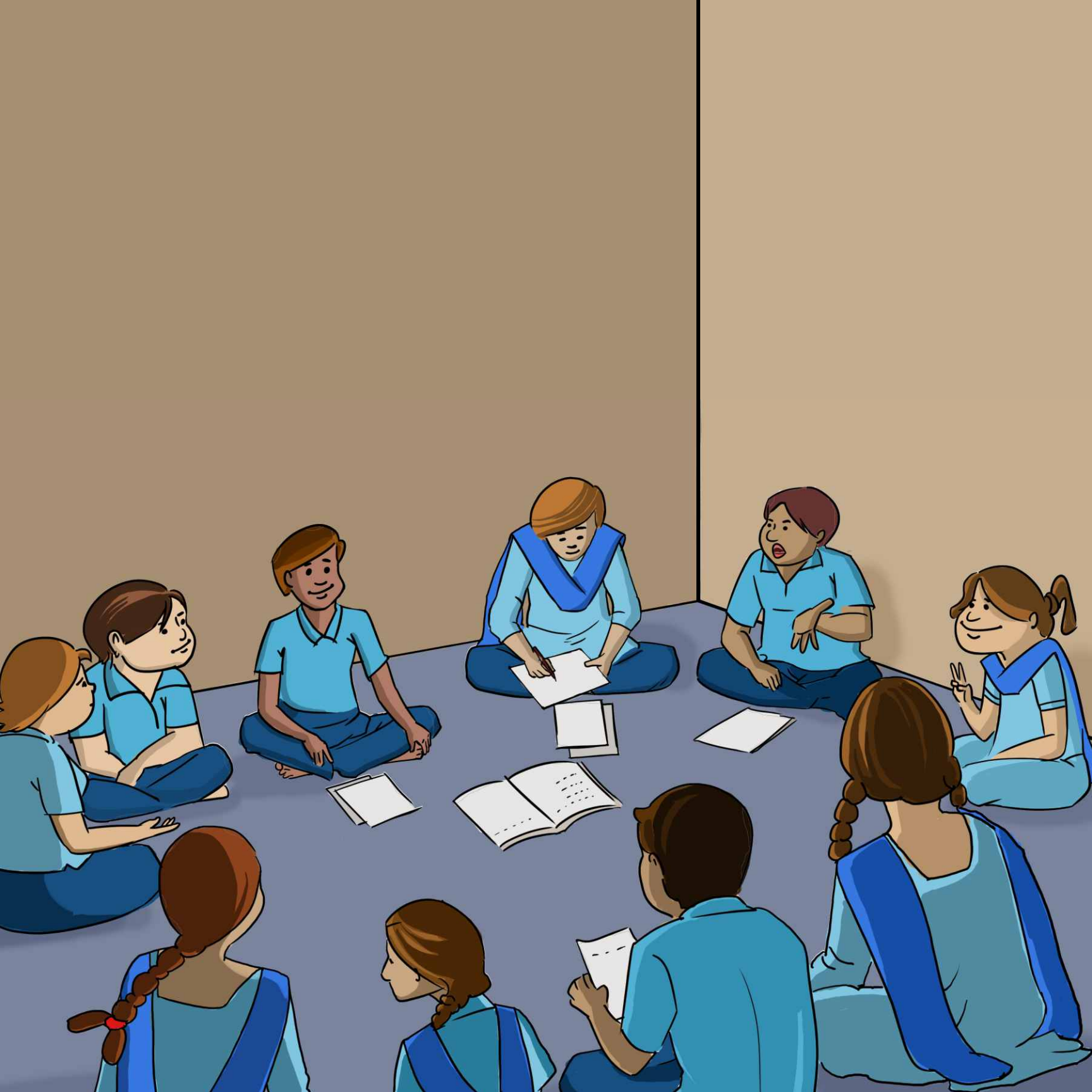
$$(a+b)(a-b) = a^2 - b^2$$

CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT

It is only when all children have been withdrawn from child labour and enrolled in schools, that the process of engaging children in formation of Children's Parliament in each village where the intervention is ongoing begins. A Children's Parliament is expected to mirror the formation of a Village Council, which are constitutional bodies of local self-governments in countries like India. Children's Parliament are expected to democratise the decision-making space in a village through increasing their engagement on issues that pertain to the entire community in general and children in particular.

Formation of a Children's Parliament ensures participation of children within the child friendly village framework also in the local decision making through the elected village councils. It starts as a process of raising awareness amongst children of their rights and responsibilities. This then moves towards realising education for all children through participation of children in identification of children out of school or in child labour leading to enrolment of such children. Once, Children's Parliament are formed, children begin to participate in collective action either on their own or with support from other stakeholder groups including the Women's Group and Youth Group. For the first two years, this process is guided by the outreach worker employed by the organisation staff.





RECOGNITION OF CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT BY VILLAGE COUNCIL

Associated with the process of electing a Children's Parliament is its recognition by the village council. This recognition ensures that Children's Parliament is recognised by the village community as the representative voice of children in the village. It also helps the Children's Parliament to participate in village council meetings where children can raise their concerns and ensure these are entered in the minutes of the meetings. Alternatively, children can invite a member of the village council to their meeting to appraise them of the challenges raised by children in Children's Parliament meetings.

Children's Parliament in villages therefore play a central role in transforming children from passive recipients of decisions made by their parents and other elders in the community into active change agents and leaders in their own right.





CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN VILLAGE AFFAIRS

Collaboration with village leaders is also significant to communicate causes and implications of child labour in their communities and the link between lack of education and the wide spread exploitation of children as labourers. Often, the Village Councils work towards their own agenda, and it does not have children as a focus or even a part. Being decision makers and leaders of the village, it is necessary to involve them into the process before any activity in the village is taken up. Thus children through the Children's Parliament participate in the village affairs and raise concerns that affect the community and children in particular. Till now through the engagement of children with the village council and rest of the community members, a number of positive developments have been possible such as 95% retention rate in schools, facilitation of infrastructural facilities such as water handpumps and taps, electricity, transportation, roads and improvement in school infrastructure such as school kitchen and class rooms.

The Children's Parliament have also been instrumental in critical engagement with the local administration for the realisation of their rights, and of the community.

YOUTH AND WOMEN'S GROUP

Women's Group and the Youth Group comprising of young men and women in a community. These groups provide the support required by children to engage with a wider set of stakeholders in an administrative area. In addition, the formation of the two groups further strengthens engagement with two other marginal groups in any community - women and young people. This engagement is premised on the fault-lines of gender and patriarchy that pervade rural India where women and young people remain at the margins of decision-making.

The groups are formed through a process of self-nomination and election. These democratic foundations are critical to the functioning of a child friendly village and therefore all groups are formed through a process of election.





More than sustainability associated with a project cycle and demanded by all major funders, the value of engaging stakeholders in participatory action is that it supports those members of a community who feel close to the values that the child friendly village intervention expects to deliver. Since the intervention is embedded in a geographical area as a social movement, it is imperative that individual leaders are groomed to continue working in their own communities to prevent violations of child rights.

RESOLVING VILLAGE ISSUES

After the constitution of all the democratic institutions, the community takes collective decisions and efforts to combat issues affecting them particularly children. Due to collective problem solving and child participation in decision making process a number of issues have been solved such as end of child labour, renovation of schools, access to education for all children, installation of water facilities, encouragement of a sense of equality amongst marginalised caste and groups, end in trafficking of children, stoppage of many illegal child marriages, access to government welfare schemes for all such as education, food security, employment, housing, information, health and social security.



SUCCESS STORIES: INDIA

Advocating with Authorities to Improve the School's Location

The school in Lakheempur Zila, Uttar Pradesh (India) had a police station adjacent to the school premises. Throughout the day, the police brought many criminals to the station and often beat them up. There were also other plaintiffs, accident victims and others that came and went. Since all this was visible from the school, it seriously impacted the concentration and studies of the children in the school. Then, in one meeting of the village's Children's Parliament, members Adilm, Aafreenm, Alka, Anish, Ishrat and Parveen decided to make it their top priority to relocate the police station. They started by speaking to the school headmaster who did not do anything and neither did the in-charge of the police station, who actually said that he refused to help. Rather than giving up, they organised a group, raised some funds and got a court order against this practice, that they then deposited in the District office who could neither ignore nor refuse to act. This move was successful in moving the police station away from the school and was made possible with the support of the people of the village.

Community Effort to Stop Child Marriage

Alvar Zila, Chitauli Gaon was one of the first villages in which the Child Friendly Village effort was started. It had barely been a week since the election of their Children's Parliament, when Anand and his friend Pushpraj got to know about the upcoming child marriages of two sisters and called for meeting of the Children's Parliament. Most of the children were scared of opposing the wedding ceremony, but that did not deter Anand. Accompanied by a few who supported him, Anand approached the teacher for help, who refused. The Children's Parliament's leaders then landed up at the venue of the marriage. However, here also, they were scolded and asked to leave. Undeterred, they then approached the head of the Village Council who tried to make them understand that though child marriage is not a good thing, but trying to stop it at the last moment would adversely affect the lives of the two sisters. He could however not say if their lives would be worse by letting the marriage take place.

Upon hearing this, the children made a call to the activist of the organisation, and took a collective decision to give a last warning to the father and other relatives of the girls. They warned them that if the marriage was not stopped immediately, they would call the police. The courage and boldness of the children made the family of the girls listen and they subsequently called off the marriage. This incident had a great impact on life in the village and also in other villages nearby. All child marriages in the region were stopped once and for all, due to the courage of the Chitauli Children's Parliament.

SUCCESS STORIES: UGANDA

Bananagaki is a 15 year old girl studying at Kato Church of Uganda Primary School in Mukono in P.6. Her father deserted the family and Bananagaki sold fish to feed her family, which is so poor that they can only afford 1 time meal and many times went without it. Bananagaki also worked in the neighbour's home to earn some living. After Global March intervened, she was withdrawn from hazardous work and was enrolled in school. Bananagaki was sensitised about the need to go to school as that will help her break the cycle of poverty for herself and her family. She now concentrates on her studies and wants the intervention to continue. She also urges the project to support more children especially her siblings who are in the same condition he was in before he was enrolled

Lunyole is a 13 year old boy who lives with her mother and worked in the agricultural field before he was enrolled in the school by Global March. He worked in the fields for long hours and was engaged in some of the most dangerous works that caused many health issues for him. Because of the intervention from Global March, Lunyole was able to receive scholastic support, uniforms and meals at school the where he was enrolled. He is so poor that he only has one pair of clothing and does not have any mattress or bedding to sleep on. He hopes that his education must be continued to be supported so that he can educate himself and become a teacher when he grows up.











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Global March Against Child Labour (Foundation):
Koningskade 30, 2596 AA, The Hague, The Netherlands

Global March International Secretariat:
23, Friends Colony (West), New Delhi-110 065, India
E: info@globalmarch.org

DONATE VIA BANK:

Account Number:
NL 97 ABNA 0498 2047 82
(ABN AMRO BANK)

Name:
Global March Against Child Labour
The Hague, The Netherlands



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