

Background paper

Strengthening participatory processes to develop child and women friendly communities: Sharing CINI's experience

Development in India: What is the picture like?

2000 was crucial for the history of human development since it was the year in which the UN Millennium Declaration was adopted by the majority of global leaders including those of India. Countries promised to work together to advance development and reduce poverty by 2015 through meeting the Millennium Development Goals. As a mark of its solidarity towards this shared commitment, India is a signatory to both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Articles 35 and 36 of CRC and Article 6 of CEDAW state that, "The state must take the responsibility to protect women and all children under 18 years from abuse, sexual exploitation, abducting, trafficking, sale and coerced prostitution"...The Indian constitution and reflect similar principles.

Despite the commitments to the different Conventions and the investments made in recent years in the social sector by the national and state governments, with the support of international development agencies, a high percentage of women and children in India, are deprived of their basic needs and fundamental rights. For development organisations like CINI, the important learning from the current situation is that economic growth leaves out the majority of the poor and vulnerable. This is reflected by the following:

- Every third malnourished child lives in India
- Three out of four children in India are anaemic
- Decline in female/male ratio is at a maximum in 0-6 years: 927 females per 1000 males
- Retention rate at primary level education is 71%¹
- Girls' enrolment in schools at primary level is 47.9%
- 11 million child labourers exist in India²
- Immunisation coverage is very low (particularly for polio measles and DPT at 58.2%, and 55.3% respectively)³

Recently, a national study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development on the extent of child abuse in India⁴ highlighted that young children in the age group 5-12 years are most exposed to abuse and exploitation. Over 17,000 children across 13⁵ states in the country participated in the survey opening a Pandora's box:

- Two out of every three children were physically abused
- Out of 69% children abused, 54.68% were boys
- 88.6% were abused by parents
- 65% school going children experienced corporal punishment
- 53.22% children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse
- Children on the streets, children involved in work and those in institutional care reported the highest incidence of sexual assault
- 50% of the abusers were people known to the child or in positions of trust and responsibility

¹ Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE NUEPA Flash Statistics DISE 2005-6

² SRO 2000

³ NFHS III

⁴ Study on Child Abuse: India 2007 conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

⁵ The study was conducted in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

- Every second child reported emotional abuse and 83% of emotional abuse came from parents
- Significantly, nearly 50% of the girls wish they were boys

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, levels of violence against women in India are alarming. It is reported that:

- 1 crime is committed against women every 3 minutes
- 1 molestation case every 15 minutes
- 1 rape every 29 minutes
- 1 dowry death every 77 minutes
- 1 cruelty by husband or relatives every 9 minutes

Child In Need Institute (CINI): A journey of 3 decades

Starting in 1974 as a health clinic in Kolkata, Child In Need Institute (CINI) has come a long way and is now recognised as a national NGO in India with an international presence. It works towards *sustainable development in health, nutrition and education of children, adolescents and women in need*. In its effort towards empowering the vulnerable communities, CINI touches the lives of about 1,500,000 vulnerable people spread across West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

For the past few years Life Cycle Approach (LCA) has been its key organisational principle. This is based on learning that focused on attention and care in the most vulnerable phases of life, i.e. early childhood (0-2 years), adolescence, and pregnancy & the lactation period, to ensure a healthy life cycle, thus breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty, malnutrition and ill health. The efforts have earned CINI national and international recognition such as:

- World of Children Humanitarian Award, New York, USA 2007
- National Award for Child Welfare, 1985 and 2004
- Award from the Italian Parliament, 2005
- The international prize "Liguria" Genoa, Italy, 1991.
- The Allen Fein Hunger Award, Brown University, USA.

A journey of more than 3 decades has led to the realisation that sustainable development demands building community partnerships towards the creation of women and child friendly spaces where no woman or child will miss the social security net woven with the basic rights of health, nutrition, education and protection. In this process women and the children are envisaged not as the target groups for receiving services but as key actors contributing to social wellbeing and capable of demanding their own rights and place in the society. CINI believes collective strength can make this possible and sustain the process of change. It dreams of creating this social change with the shared commitment of communities and service providers, as well as with local self governments.

Child & Women Friendly Community: What is it all about?

A Child and Women Friendly Community is a local system that promotes good local governance in favour of fulfilling children's and women's rights, by guaranteeing their right to:

- Influence decisions about their locality(village/city)
- Express their opinion on the city they want
- Participate in family, community and social life
- Receive basic services such as health care, education and shelter
- Drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation
- Be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse
- Walk safely in the streets on their own
- Meet friends and socialise
- Have green spaces for plants and animals
- Live in an unpolluted environment
- Participate in cultural and social events

- Be equal citizens in their city with access to every service, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, gender or disability

Some global experience: Has there been any similar initiative elsewhere?

There have been Child Friendly City (CFC) initiatives around the world. These have been documented by the International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities, UNICEF, adopting a research protocol developed on the basis of the CFC Framework for Action. These case studies highlight successful methods and strategies pioneered by innovative CFC builders. These CFC good practices are regularly updated with the results of documentation and research from: Italy UK, Canada, Philippines, Nigeria, Germany, Spain, Bolivia, New Zealand, Sudan and Bangladesh.

The Strategic direction: How does CINI plan to take this process ahead?

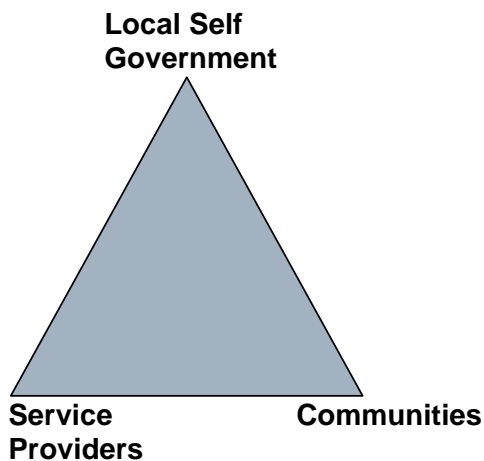
Key Goal

To accelerate the achievement of the MDGs in the key areas of education, protection, health and nutrition (EPHN) by facilitating the creation of model child and women-friendly communities (CWFC) in selected urban and rural areas of West Bengal, with the involvement of the community and local self-government stakeholders.

CWFC entails the following:

- Improved quality of services to all poor people, particularly children and women without any discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, HIV/AIDS status and political affiliation.
- Improved awareness of entitlements among end users, particularly the poor and vulnerable, thereby increasing demand for quality services.
- The service providers will act as facilitators by being responsive to the needs and aspirations of the poor and thereby treat them as active participants rather than passive recipients.
- Individual concerns of the marginalised population turn into collective voice

The 3 pillars



The 3 main pillars of the Child and Women Friendly Community are the *communities, local government* and the *service providers*. CINI will **facilitate** the process of building and strengthening a strong partnership among the local self government (Panchayat or local urban bodies), the communities and the service providers to plan and monitor social welfare services for the poor and vulnerable to achieve development goals at a local level. Special attention will be given to include traditionally marginalised groups:- women and children, as well as other socially neglected groups. It will build the capacity of Panchayat members in responding to the development problems affecting women and children in their constituency and in supervising the service delivery system to reach out to all citizens. It will further facilitate social mobilisation processes, strengthen the capacity of service providers, identify bottlenecks in the service

delivery system and empower the community to demand the fulfilment of their rights. In this process CINI looks forward to working through **self-help groups of women**, who have recently emerged as crucial vehicles for change.

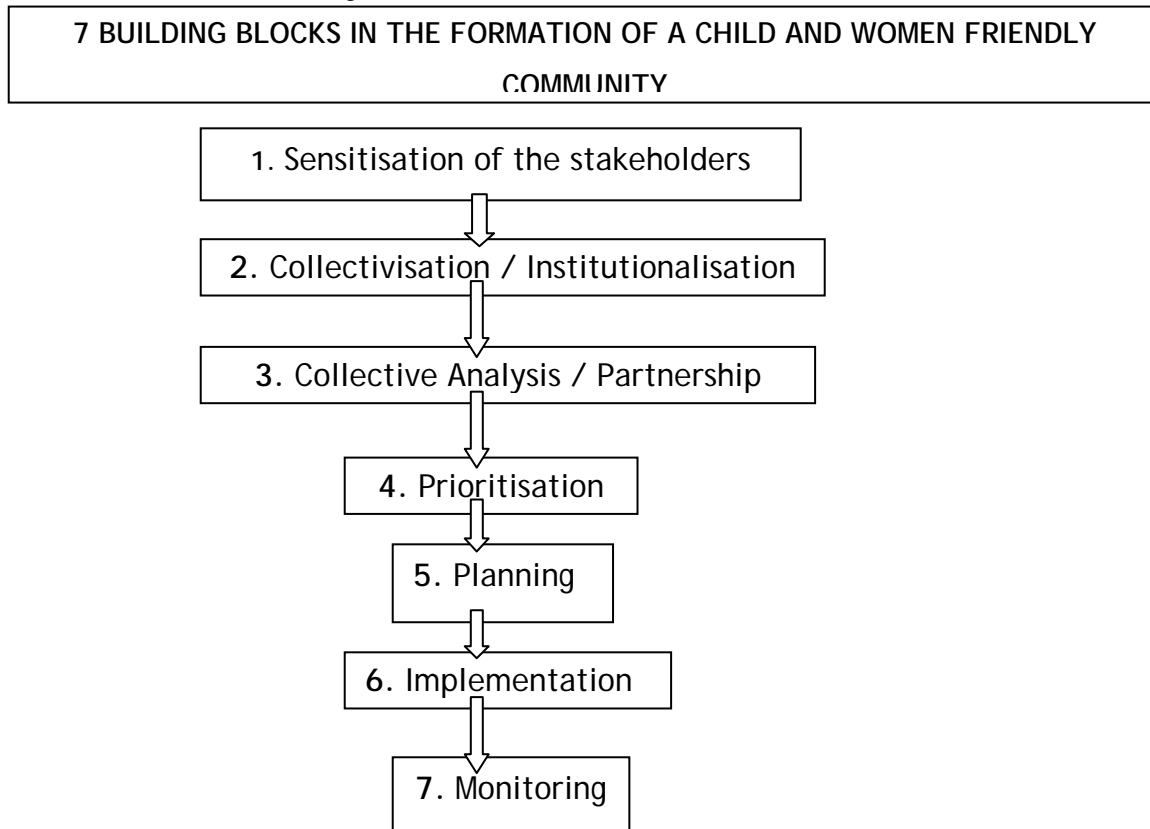
While working on the basic framework of a holistic development in the life cycle of women and children, the issues of **Education, Protection, Health & Nutrition (EPHN)** are prioritised as the key components of the framework.

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) will be a key strategic input focusing on the promotion of positive behaviours across the EPHN domains. Broadly, BCC activities at the

individual and household level will aim to create awareness about rights and entitlements, EPHN issues, and also to motivate the family members to access the relevant services.

The whole initiative is perceived as a participatory rights based approach aimed at the empowerment of local stakeholders to become actors in the development of their locality. Every step towards unfolding this, will involve intensive capacity development of the members from respective pillars. Hence, special care will be taken to strengthen **capacity building** of stakeholders through participatory learning, as well as to improve the skills of the internal teams to enable them to facilitate this.

Processes will be thoroughly **documented** to capture the learning and analyse the potential for expanding it to other areas with vulnerable populations. This will help to build the evidence base for **advocacy** to improve the application of existing policies, change existing policies and raise awareness of the need for new policies. Allies and strategic partners will be identified to lobby for effective and sustainable change.



Challenges: Is it going to be easy?

Not really. There is definitely a challenge associated with realising the CWFC concept in practice, in a sensitive and dynamic political environment. CWFC essentially embodies a social change process and encompasses inherent risk of social and political factors. These relate particularly to the status quo of existing power relationships. To avoid this, there is a need to build partnerships between different stakeholders at every level, particularly with Government, to complement its existing plans for decentralisation.

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