

## Child Rights and You (CRY)

### 1. Year of Establishment: 1979

### 2. Mission Statement:

To enable people to take responsibility for the situation of deprived Indian children, and to motivate them to seek resolution through individual and collective action, thereby enabling children to realize their full potential, and people to discover their potential for action and sustainable change. Also, to enable people's collectives and movements encompassing diverse segments, to pledge their particular strengths, working in partnership to secure, protect, and honour the rights of India's children.

### 3. Key Achievements:

Over four decades of experience, CRY has achieved a significant impact on the consciousness and prioritization of the children and their rights in the Indian society. More concretely, CRY has mobilized hundreds and thousands of people to act for children. Here are just a few areas where CRY's work impacted children and communities:

- Empowering grassroots level non-profit organisations in taking initiatives in far-flung corners of the country – CRY has supported almost 800 partnerships over the past 44 years.
- Innovating and finding different ways to address the myriad issues India's children faced – including teacher training programmes, developing bridge schools for child labourers, and many other models.
- Redefining philanthropy in many ways, including urging people to buy CRY greeting cards, where the proceeds would go to various child development programmes and many other forms of donations including individual and corporate partnerships etc.
- Reaching out to people from all the walks of life and encouraging them to volunteer for change in whichever way they could. This includes engaging with painters and organising exhibitions of their works, which they voluntarily donated to CRY.
- Engaging with children, helping them rediscover their childhoods.
- Working closely with parents, teachers, Anganwadi workers, communities, district and state level governments.

- Focusing on changing behaviours and practices at the grass roots level and influencing public policy, thereby striving to create an ecosystem where children are made the nation's priority.

#### **4. Challenges Faced:**

If we were to narrow it down to the fundamental challenges, we would say they are the result of two prime factors. The first is that many of us are still not prepared to consider children as rights holders in their own right, just as we adults are. This leads to the lack of awareness about the basic rights our children are entitled to, and also holds us from investing in our children, both in the short and long term.

These factors affect almost every aspect of children's lives – their development, health and nutrition, education, and of course their safety and protection; as well as the primary conditions and basic infrastructure enabling these.

There are various schemes and policies in place that, if implemented optimally, can bring about transformational change. However, their coverage is not universal, and communities are often not aware of their existence. We need to stop looking at children only as the 'future' of our country and worry about them as citizens only after they turn eighteen. We need to become accountable for them as the 'present' of the country, a section that needs our immediate attention.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the condition in which children from marginalized sections of the society live and how their right to protection, education, health and nutrition has been compromised during this time of crisis. To sum up, the need to protect our children and their rights has never been greater.

Nonetheless, the fundamental challenge is perhaps the way the larger society looks at them – the social perception of children. For example, it is almost accepted and normalized in Indian society for a child to work in a dhaba or in a motor garage instead of going to school, or for a girl child to take care of her siblings at home when her brothers go to school, or for a girl being married off before she reaches adolescence. These things are so deeply embedded in our everyday experiences and thought processes that we take them for granted. This mind set, I believe, is the biggest challenge that children face.

#### **5. Strategies for Success:**

CRY's professional capability comes from over four decades of work implementing large-scale programmes aimed at reducing vulnerabilities of children. CRY's work in

partnership with more than 100 non-governmental organisations across 19 States in India, extends from the level of rural / urban / local bodies to the national level.

CRY follows a multi-disciplinary approach with a focus on children's participation, mobilization of communities around them, partnerships with local child-related systems like schools, as well as local governance, and going forward to the quasi-government bodies such as National Institute of Disaster Management, National Law University, National/State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, etc. CRY also focuses on creating research based on its regular secondary data analysis, policy review, and evidence-based primary research.

While CRY's core mission of "enabling people to take responsibility for the situation of the deprived Indian child" has remained intact over the past 44 years, our strategies have changed to reflect the changing realities and evolving children's issues.

One such example is how we have changed our strategy to reach out to children in the time of the COVID pandemic. In the wake of the pandemic and the lockdown induced by it, our first thoughts were to respond to the current needs of our children and their communities in that terrible time. Our topmost concern was the survival and health of children and the communities in the remotest regions of our operational areas. Therefore, during the lockdown months, CRY's efforts were concentrated on reaching as many households as possible with basic health and hygiene kits for children and their families.

We also spread awareness, distributed relief materials, advocating for the access and availability of services to the communities and children. The awareness building programmes covered topics like social distancing, best practices related to public health and hygiene and behaviour change, sanitization, use of face masks, following government guidelines during the lockdown period and ways to protect people from community spreading of the epidemic.

Another significant strategy was to share useful information about access of emergency health facilities. As part of the awareness programmes, children and our volunteers created posters, wall paintings, short videos on hand washing, social distancing, vaccination and wearing masks.

Apart from the COVID-response activities to address immediate needs of children, we also started many customized initiatives to address the loss of education that children suffered from during the prolonged closure of schools. One such example is 'Bridge School Initiative' and other psycho-social support programmes which we began to

enable children to reconnect with their school education and give them the necessary confidence/nudge to go back to school when they reopened. We successfully ran these initiatives across 433 villages in 48 districts of 15 states.

## **6. Lessons Learned:**

- Clarity about our Theory of change & programming approaches and its rootedness in org values. Since this is always evolved in a collective and inclusive manner, it permeates through all our internal governance processes and work on the ground.
- Ear to the ground and staying abreast of the external developments/factors affecting children. Backed by quick decision – making. Helps us respond quickly and relevantly to changing situations and emergencies.
- Strong accountability and transparency systems that help to hold ourselves and our partners to high standards/increase productivity.
- Multi – function/stakeholder project management has been critical to ensuring timely outcomes, affixing accountability and enhancing effectiveness.
- Proper and clear documentation of all processes and decisions has helped to build a repository and reference for the future. Conversely in instances where this has been absent it has led to confusion, miscommunication and wastage of time/efficiency.

## **7. Impact Assessment:**

Our impact assessment is based on our Results Based Management system to understand specific outcomes, impact, needs and challenges of the children in the communities that we work with. We assess the effectiveness of our work directly with children and with multiple stakeholders at community and government level across our five goals which are education, health, nutrition, protection and participation. The assessment is done on a half yearly and annual level with some indicators being tracked on a monthly and quarterly basis.

For specific programmes like our life skill modules we have an in – house developed assessment tool which is applied in a sample-based manner to assess the impact of the programme on children.

We also plan Impact assessments by external experts and evaluators towards enhancing quality of our work and to elicit strategic inputs from objective and knowledgeable sources.

## **8. The Ultimate Strong Point of Success:**

There are many things that made CRY what it is today, but the one among them that is its intrinsic inclusiveness. CRY has always been willing to accommodate every individual and empower them to become a change-maker. Since the very beginning, CRY has encouraged people from all walks of life to come forward and join its journey, with a strong belief in every citizen's potential to contribute to the cause of children.

Over the past four decades, CRY has been working continuously with communities, policy makers, volunteers, youth and the civil society at large, in bringing about change for children. CRY has worked with a wide range of people including eminent painters, singers and actors; niche organisations known for their excellence in their own fields; members of rural communities; renowned social thinkers and celebrities; and college students. We entrusted them to conceptualise and execute full-scale awareness campaigns, lead fund-raisers, take up big and small surveys, and, most importantly, we could successfully embed the idea in their mind that every individual is capable of becoming an agent of social change in her own ways.

Take the example of National Child Rights Research Fellowship (NCRRF) a twelve-year-old initiative of CRY, where we encouraged common people to take up serious research works related to children – a programme that ardently strove to build research capacities of people – any people – who demonstrated a passion and interest for children's rights to explore a topic of their interest in a scientific and ethical manner. Over the past decade, as many as 55 researchers have been awarded with the Fellowship.

## **9. Future Ready:**

In the immediate future, we want to see CRY as one of the most trusted organizations working for children's rights in India. It is about ensuring a happy, healthy and creative child whose rights are protected and honored in a society that is built on respect for dignity, justice and equity for all. In keeping with this vision, we will strive to focus on the following:

- A) CRY as a catalyst for change both in the larger society and with specific duty-bearers, and will keep on working towards bringing in sustainable social change for children.
- B) Working towards changing attitude of people to children.
- C) Towards sensitizing people and empower them to come forward and willing to champion the cause of children and become agents for social change.

D) Commitment to finding, piloting and institutionalizing irreversible change, with a focus on sustainability through empowering communities and children.

E) Focus on strategies that ensures the best return of investment, when it comes to ensuring lasting change for children.

**Contact Address:**

189/ A Anand Estate, Sane Guruji Marg, Mumbai – 400011. Maharashtra, India.

Email: [cryinfo.mum@crymail.org](mailto:cryinfo.mum@crymail.org); [shinjini.chatterjee@crymail.org](mailto:shinjini.chatterjee@crymail.org);

Website: [www.cry.org/](http://www.cry.org/)