

## ***Right to School***

***Ensuring children get the school they deserve***



### **The Right to School Campaign:**

Asking a child to spend the whole day in school without a single sip of water or without access to a toilet is an unfair ask....yet thousands of children in India face this and many other challenges everyday to continue their education.

Lack of proper boundary walls, playground and learning materials, teachers not coming to school regularly, no separate toilets for girls, travelling long distances to get to school etc. all add up to children losing motivation in coming to school and eventually dropping out. Thus they lose touch with education and a brighter future.

The RTE Act has come into force 7 years ago and while there have been significant changes since then – there are still many schools especially in rural parts of our country where the situation is still bleak, where children struggle and face challenges to remain connected to education. Lack of awareness on their part as well as on the parts of their parents also ensures that they don't understand the necessity or the importance of continuing and therefore often do not go back to school as well.

Identifying and correcting the root causes that deny children their right to school will ensure that these schools function as per norms and children are motivated to continue and complete their education.

### **CRY's approach & implementation**

There are multiple influencers in a child's life. Parents, extended family, community members, local governance structures, teachers, health workers etc. To therefore bring about a change in *their* situation, it is necessary to engage with all these stakeholders.

Therefore, CRY's work includes working with families, community members, local governance and any other stakeholder who would directly or indirectly have an influence on the child's life.

CRY works in the proposed intervention areas, by engaging and mobilizing the community and activating government machinery. The project team is normally a grassroot NGO and often come from the same background and roots as the community in which they work. The project team creates in-roads and builds relationships with the community to involve them in the whole process and enable them to take control of making their lives, and their children's lives better.

Identifying leaders from the community, women's groups and children's groups are activated and the process of sensitization is started to help them understand their rights and what they can do to ensure those rights are ensured to them. Some specific segments or age groups might be more vulnerable in this respect and therefore get special focus in the quest to ensure education.

CRY believes in activating government machinery and not creating parallel services since the former model makes the change that is brought about more permanent and sustained. Even if CRY were to pull out of the intervention area in a few years time, with government services functioning actively and the community themselves monitoring those services, the work can continue irrespective.

Also since a lot of CRY's work is about changing mindsets and attitudes, there is a sense of permanency that is brought about.

### Intervention Areas:



1. CRY works with 3350 children between 6 – 14 years in this intervention area in 65 villages in the district of Rajkot in Gujarat. The villages within the intervention area are spread apart and there aren't adequate numbers of schools – therefore children have to travel long distances to get to school. Child labour is also rampant and therefore drop out rates are high. Enrollments are high and within parameters but many children drop out as they grow older since they are considered as an additional income provider in the family. Post puberty girls are kept at home as well.
2. In this intervention area the work is with 448 children in the age range of 6 – 14 years in 2 suburban Mumbai wards. The community in this intervention area belong to a minority community and have very little awareness on their rights. Most children complete elementary education but then drop out as they face discrimination at school. There is also severe gender bias and parents fear for the safety of their daughters and hesitate to send them to school. Most schools do not have separate toilets for girls and therefore dropouts are very high when they hit puberty.
3. This intervention area is based in 28 villages in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, reaching out to 1817 children between 6 – 14 years. Most of the families this intervention area works with belong to the dalit community and face huge caste based discrimination. In a situation where all children struggle to access school – these

specific children have a bigger challenge in the face of the discrimination handed out. They never receive adequate attention from teachers and often lose the motivation to continue school.

**Situation at the intervention area:**

Most of the children in these project areas face multiple challenges daily to ensure they have access to their rights. Education is perhaps the one single tool that would help them break away from this cycle and ensure they have a



chance at a brighter future. However, there are multiple reasons that keep them away from accessing and completing their education.

**Lack of infrastructure:** The RTE Act clearly sets up guidelines and basic norms that schools have to adhere to. However the reality can be far removed. Lack of proper toilets is one of the main things that can pose a challenge for a child in school. Many schools do not even have toilets within their premises . In cases where toilets are present – they may not be functional nor have proper water or handwash facilities. In an overwhelmingly number of cases – there are no separate toilets for girls ensuring a high dropout rate once girls hit puberty. Drinking water facilities are also largely absent, as are proper boundary walls around the schools to ensure children are safe and protected. As if these reasons were not enough by themselves – learning materials and basics like blackboards etc can also be missing at times – leading to children losing interest in coming to school.

**Lack of teachers and classrooms:** Teacher children ratios are often not maintained as per the norms and some schools do not even have specific teachers and separate classrooms for separate classes. This leads to children not getting adequate attention and often being ignored altogether. Not having a separate classroom also means all the children irrespective of classes are herded together leading to difficulties in learning. In many schools teachers do not attend regularly and in cases of minority communities – discrimination at the hands of the teachers is a common occurrence.

**Access to School:** Some of these intervention areas are in remote locations with schools at great distances. Parents are therefore often hesitant to send their children to school. As girls grow up – parents fear for their safety in travelling alone to school and would therefore

prefer to keep them at home. Often primary schools are accessible but secondary schools are at a distance – leading to high drop outs at that stage.

**Child labour, child marriage, gender discrimination etc:** Most of the children come from families where parents struggle to make ends meet. Children therefore often end up finding menial jobs to supplement the family income. They also migrate with parents during certain times of the year to find employment and therefore lose touch with school. Many girls are considered burdens by their families and are married off very early – forcing them to drop out of school. Many of them also stay at home to look after younger siblings and manage household chores while both parents are at work. Either way – dropping out of school becomes a by product. In fact gender discrimination is the main reason why girls are at a further disadvantage compared to their brothers when it comes to accessing education.

**Lack of awareness:** Many children and parents are not aware of the necessity of education and therefore do not understand how education can ensure a brighter future. Also often children who do make it to school are first generation learners in their families and therefore get little or no support or help at home. They often therefore drop out of school.

**School Monitoring Committees:** These committees or SMCs are a very vital part of ensuring that schools function properly and children have access to education. These committees include parents and representatives from the community and are a link with the school administration. This committee is very essential in not only making sure that everything is running smoothly but also works as a place where grievances and issues might be taken up to provide a better learning environment for children. However, the lack of a proper structure in these SMCs in the intervention areas lead to schools not functioning properly.

#### **The difference YOU can make:**

By contributing and supporting the fight against issues which prevent schools from functioning as per the norms – YOU can ensure that the situation is corrected in multiple schools at the various intervention areas and that **5615 children** can get the school that they deserve.

Thus ensuring that they have the solid foundation they need for a successful future.

**The contribution required for this fund is INR 18,51,140/-**

**We will be sending you a report at the end of the year . You will continue to receive other updates on CRY's activities periodically.**

**The minimum contribution for this grant is INR 1,00,000/- You can choose to donate any amount .**

**You can send in your contribution through a cheque drawn in favour of CRY – Child Rights and YOU , our mailing address is as follows:**

**CRY – Child Rights and You**

**Global Operations Division**

**632, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Lane No. 3,**

**West End Marg, Saiyad ul Ajaib**

**New Delhi - 110030**

**OR**

**The contribution can be sent through a bank transfer the details for sending the contribution is mentioned below.**

**If you are an Indian Passport holder, please provide the following information to your bank:**

- Account Name: CRY- Child Rights And You
- Bank Name: Axis Bank
- Address: Monolith Building, 7, Napean Sea Road, Mumbai-400036, Maharashtra, India
- Bank Account No: 149010100084181
- Account Type: Savings Account
- NEFT/IFSC Code: UTIB0000149

