

## **Child Secretariat – Steering Committee Meeting**

The first Steering committee meeting of Child Secretariat was held on 8<sup>th</sup> February at the Mini conference Hall, collectorate. The Chairman of the Child Secretariat, the District Collector presided over the meeting. The directors from Educational Department, Disable Rehabilitation Office, Social Welfare Department, DRO (Nodal Officer) and the Executive Committee members of CSt were present for the meeting.

In the inaugural address, the Chairman very proudly spoke about the innovative mechanism of Child Secretariat and he was mentioning that it is the responsibility of every one to protect the well being of the children of our district. Then the Chairman asked the DRO to lead the meeting. Mr. Ayyappan, one of the Executive Committee members of CSt. officially welcomed all the participants.

### **1. Activities of CSt.**

Mr. Ashok, Joint Secretary of CSt. explained the activities of CSt. in detail.

- Net work of NGOs & Children's' Day celebration in block levels
- The Educational assistance given to 23 children from Boomika Trust from Chennai.
- Free admission for 6 eligible students in Teacher Training Institutes with the help of the district administration.
- Formation of District level Federation of Children groups
- Medical assistance given to 2 children with the help of CMC Vellore.
- Various workshops conducted in the district as well as in the state level
- Various studies like – Status of Orphan Children in the district, Status of Residential care centers in the district, Child Headed Families in the district and the status of children in general - are the important studies undertaken by the CSt.

These are some of the activities shared in the meeting. The District Collector appreciated the works done by CSt, and especially he was impressed about the formation of Federation of Children groups in the district.

### **2. Study on the Status of Residential Care Institutions in the District:**

Mr. Jerald, Secretary of CSt. gave a presentation about the study conducted on Residential Care Centers in the district. Some of the key points –

- a) Total number of residential homes - 44
- Number of homes came after tsunami - 22
- Homes registered with the Govt. - 16
  
- b) Key Issues/ problems at homes-
- Lack of proper monitoring mechanism

- No proper guidelines are in place
- Lack of trained teachers/counselors and staff members.
- Lack of awareness regarding the registration of homes and its procedures.
- No periodical check ups for the children
- Poor infra structure facilities at home
- No proper documentation about the children.

c) Homes that need immediate intervention from the Govt.

Based on the poor safety and lack of medical check ups for the well being of the children the above mentioned homes need immediate intervention form the district administration. The collector has given the order to the Director of Social Welfare Department to take immediate steps and measures to protect the children.

d). Homes that need our appreciation. These homes satisfy the minimum standard to a large extent.

e). Decisions taken based on the Recommendations.

1. Immediate steps to be taken against the 11 homes that are not fit for the children.
2. Social Welfare Department will make arrangements for the periodical medical checkups in these homes.
3. Steps will be taken by the Collector to shift the Child Welfare Committee that is functioning in Mayiladuthurai.
4. Based on the JJ Act 2000, steps will be taken to form District Child Advisory Committee. Till then the Social Welfare Department will take all necessary action to speed up the process of registration of homes and effective monitoring mechanism will be in place.
5. The free toll free number of Child Line -1098 will be activated to the entire district. DRO was asked to have a talk with BSNL.
6. Similar kind of study will be conducted by the Child Secretariat on the govt. and private run school/ college hostels. The Collector will issue the authorization letter to the Child Secretariat.
7. Periodical training/ awareness programme will be held to the school teachers on Child Rights, Child Protection and Child Psychology in order to create a conducive environment for the children to grow and to develop.
8. Based on the request the District Administration will provide special attention to the Arivagam home in Mayiladuthurai.

### **3. Status of Orphan and children living with Single Parent:**

Ms. Annie George, CEO of BEDROC presented the study report on the status of orphan and children living with single parent. Some of the findings are as follows –

- Due to the various support given by the Govt. and NGOs, the Tsunami affected orphan children are in a better situation than the other orphan and children with single parent.
- The children who are staying with their mothers are safer and happier than the children staying with their fathers.
- The general orphan children have better coping mechanism than the tsunami affected children.
- Foster Care system can be developed for the betterment of these children.

The District Collector has assured that all the necessary steps will be taken for the best interest of the children in the district. He appreciated the activities done by the CSt. he was also mentioning that these kind of joint effort will bear more fruit to the children. With that the meeting came to an end.

**Thanks .....**

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