



"IDG 2022, Me to We"

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD 2022

The Beijing Declaration is the first historical document and commitment to specifically call out girls' rights. As a response to girl children's rights, on 19th December, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution and declared 11th October as the International Day of the Girl Child, to recognize the unique challenges girls are facing around the world and the need for finding constructive solutions. As the United Nations celebrates the 10th Anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Amaravathi, following the spirituality of their Mother Foundress, St. Mary Euphrasia, who had special concern for the girl children and women since the French Revolution, continue to walk the talk in 74 countries by way of working for the rights of girl children and women.

As a part of their mission, in the Andhra Pradesh State of India, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd have been organising various activities since 1967 in support of the liberation of the people at the margins, especially, children and women in difficulties. Over the last 10 years, in promotion of the rights of girl children, a series of girl child rights activities were taken up. The first activity, this year, was on 10th October, 2022 in partnership with the Women in Self Help Groups in Amaravathi, Pedakurupadu and Krosur regions, Pallotti Junior College, and St. Augustine High School. The International Day of the Girl Child was observed in Amaravathi town with a rally and public meeting which was a momentum for them to express their commitment for girl children and women and also educate the public on the state of girl children; the second activity was the public meeting on 11th October, 2022 at the district-level in partnership with the Child Rights Protection Team, and the third one was School-level Awareness Programme at Stall Girls High School, Guntur.

While the UN chose "Our Time is Now – Our Rights, Our Future", the Sisters of the Good Shepherd chose "IDG 2022, Me to We", as the theme of the day to give special focus on developing a 'WE' culture against 'ME' culture; it is a call for inclusive and collective thinking and doing, instead of focusing on individual needs and development.

ACTIVITY 1: Local-level Rally & Public Meeting on Girl Child Rights

On 10th October, 2022, a rally was taken out on the streets of Amaravathi town; girls, boys and women from different villages, students of both sexes from different Colleges and Schools, as many as 250 of them, participated in the rally. Women leaders from different villages, students and youth from colleges and schools formed a rally in Amaravathi town and raised slogans and

carried placards with messages such as 'save the girl child', 'be bold to stop violence and raise your concern for the girl child', 'prevent all forms of violence against women and girls' 'eliminate violence on girl children and women', 'girls are pillars of society', 'girls are pearls', 'save the girls, and save the future mothers', '*adapilla chadavu avanikku velugu*' (educated girl children are the lights of the world), and so on.

Public Meeting

Followed by the rally, a public meeting was organised in which Government Officials, Social Activists, and Religious Leaders were invited to address the public on the challenges faced by the girl children and women of today and the means of overcoming such situations.

Mrs. Indira, CDPO – Child Development Project Officer, in her speech said that it is a known fact that girls and women have been subjected to centuries of discrimination. But this has been slowly changing and there is an increased awareness about equality towards girl children and providing them with equal opportunity in society. In order to ensure equality, there are plenty of opportunities available. Parents as well as girl children must make use of such openings.

Fr. Jeevan Kishore, Asst. Parish Priest, Amaravathi, in his short deliberation said that children must make use of the opportunities and the freedom given by their parents for their personal growth and social development.

Mr. Soundarajan, Sub-Inspector of Police, Amaravathi, in his deliberation said that child marriage is an enemy which hinders all-round development of girl children; every citizen has responsibility to report the same to the concerned authorities in order to safeguard the rights of girl children.

Mr. Ravi Sekar, ex Asst. Engineer, Electricity Department, Amaravathi, said that girl children must be given importance; as a first step, awareness must be spread and mindsets changed to ensure that communities and families welcome and celebrate daughters.

Mr. Sameer Kumar, CHILDLINE Coordinator, in his turn explained the safeguarding measures and toll-free phone numbers available such as 112, and 1098, to access emergency services in times of trouble for children. Mr. Sameer Kola, who has completed 10 years of service as the Coordinator of CHILDLINE in Guntur City, expressed his happiness over the overwhelming responses he gets towards protecting the rights of all children aged 0 to 18 through the use of the toll-free telephone number. He said that through CHILDLINE throughout the country rescuing and assisting of children in

distress takes place round the clock. Their particular focus is on all children in need of care and protection, especially the more vulnerable sections.

Sr. Deanna Pereira, Counsellor for the adolescent girls and women, in her turn referring to the theme of the day, "IDG 2022, Me to We", said that in the Bible, in Genesis we read about creation; on the 6th day after creating Adam, God was not very happy as He felt there was a lack of something, but after creating Eve He felt happy and said 'this is very good'. She said that the girls and women must think of themselves as persons with dignity and pride, for it is they who, in their family life take the responsibility of promoting 'we' feeling among the family members compared to their counterparts. Hence, she said that girls and women are special in several ways.

Mr. John Aruldass, Social Worker in his deliberation encouraged the adolescent girls to understand their self in order to shine well in the future. He said that human beings suffer for want of understanding their 'self' than anything else. He requested the participants to understand their own beauty, the subtlety of their creation, and learn to appreciate the beauty of their own self. In order to achieve something in life, one has to take into account his/her physical as well as psychological needs and train his/her mind to achieve their personal and social goals in life.

ACTIVITY 2: District-level Celebration on Girl Child Rights

A public meeting on 11th October, 2022 at the District Head Quarters, jointly organised by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Amaravathi and the Guntur District Child Rights Protection Unit was attended by Government Officials, School Children, elected leaders and the Heads of NGOs and their project people. Mr. Venugopal Reddy, the District Collector of Guntur District, Christina Henry, the Chairperson of the Zilla Parishad, Mr. Laxman, State Chairperson of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA; Save Childhood Movement) which is an India-based children's rights movement, Mr. Padmakumar, District Judge, Dr. Priyanka, Dr. Manoranjani, District Medical Health Officer, and Sr. Vinnarasi, Director of Women & Children Empowerment of the Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi, were the special invitees to the celebration of the International Day for the Girl Child.

The special invitees spoke to the participants on several topics such as gender discrimination from birth to death, nutritional deficiency, health and hygiene-related problems, stress, harassment, sexual abuse, educational deprivation, dowry-related harassment, gender pay gap, child marriage, and the means of overcoming them which include welfare measures available, awareness about the existing opportunities, laws that protect them and the means of obtaining/utilising them.

ACTIVITY 3: Celebrating Girls at the School-level

On 11th October, 2022, in the afternoon from 3 pm to 4.30 pm, the Sisters and their Partners-in-Mission made efforts to meet with approximately 300 girls for an awareness session in the age group of 12 to 16 years at Stall Girls High School, Guntur, a school which takes pride in the holistic and innovative learning methods which have helped them raise the bar in the field of education. During the one and half hour, girls were provided with insights for them to ponder over their rights and duties which was a first-time opportunity for the children to get to know their rights and duties. The principal objective of the session was to enable the girl children feel proud to have been born as girls who would become responsible persons in bringing forth a new women's generation and who will exercise their right to life, right to protection, right to development and participation.

Reflection & Conclusion

Children are the future and it is the responsibility of every adult to provide them a safe space in their day-to-day life. In the context of increasing incidences of abuses being inflicted on the girl children, it is time that, we, the adults, need to make every day, a safe day for them to grow and develop their knowledge, skills, and attitude that would safeguard them from all forms of abuses and violence. Nurturing them for a safe future must take place in the day today activities. In other words, children must be celebrated every day because every second they are growing and hence let us renew our commitment towards the future, our children and their rights.

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PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE CELEBRATION OF GIRL CHILDREN 2022



The RALLY FOR GIRL CHILDREN on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child 2022 was taken-out in Amaravathi Town, the Capital of Andhra Pradesh State, India



Participants of the 'Rally for Girl Children' stand in a circle at a junction point in Amaravathi town to raise their voice for the rights of girl children



Men too join the 'Rally for Girl Children' and raise their voices to express their solidarity with girl children





Child marriage negatively influences girl children's rights to education, health and protection, says Mr. Soundarajan, Sub-Inspector of Police, Amaravathi



Girls and women must feel as persons of dignity and honour as they are responsible for shaping the future generation, says Sr. Deanna Pereira of the Good Shepherd Convent, Amaravathi

Mr. Sameer of Good Shepherd Childline services says that children as well as adults can call toll-free phone number 1098 for rescuing and rehabilitating children in distress



To save humans from extinction, we have to take measures to save girl children, says, Mr. Ravi Sekar, Ex. Asst. Engineer, Department of Electricity

Mrs. Indira, Child Development Project Officer says that children must make use of the opportunities available to them for their personal development as well as for the good of others in society



Children must make use of the trust and freedom accorded to them by their parents for their self development and the society, says, Fr. Jeevan Kishore, Assistant Parish Priest of Amaravathi







Mr. Laxman, Project Coordinator of Economic Justice for Women explained to the girl children their rights - right to live, right to development, right to protection, right to participation.



Mr. Babu, Member of CHILDLINE Team, elucidated the types of abuses the children are subject to, and the means of overcoming them

Through a group song, the Girl Children studying at Stall Girls High School were taught about the functioning of CHILDLINE 1098 in protecting children in need of care and protection



Sr. Deanna Pereira, Counsellor for the Girls and Women, Good Shepherd Convent taught the children an action song that teaches the value of being grateful to the Creator

