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New Alipore Praajak Development Society

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



ABOUT PRAAJAK

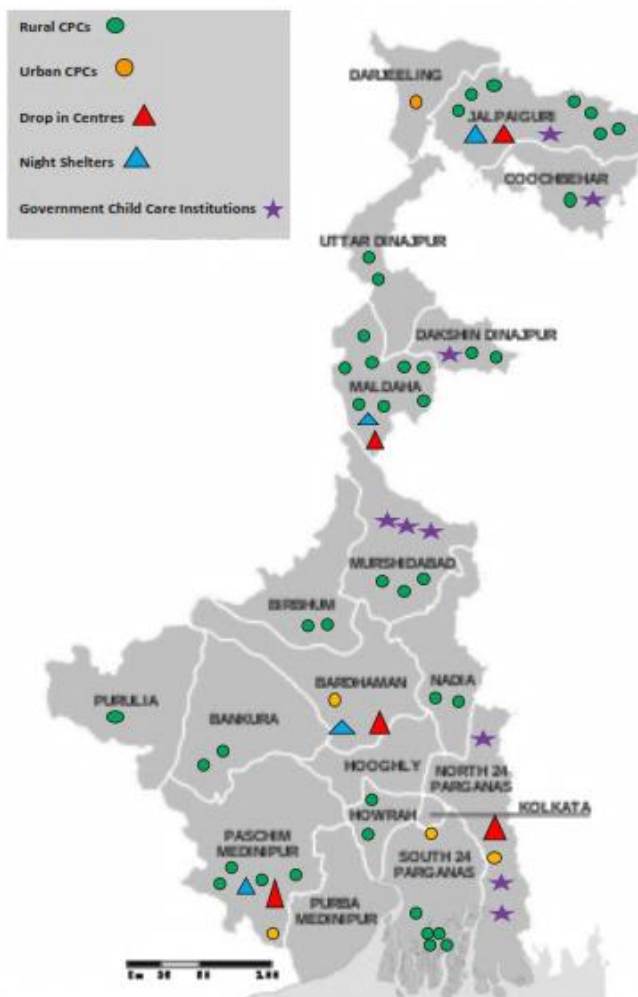
Praajak Development Society is committed to contributing to efforts aimed at providing an enabling and secure environment for children and young people. Since its inception in 1997 in Kolkata (West Bengal, India), the organization has focused on supporting children and young people who are particularly vulnerable. There has been an emphasis on working with those living in and around railway stations and within families and communities facing marginalization and poverty. Children in institutional care constitute another significant domain. Child rights, particularly child protection, lies at the heart of all of Praajak's initiatives.

The major programmatic components are:

- ☀️ Muktangon (drop in Centre and night shelters for children living in and around railway stations)
- ☀️ Promoting Community based Child Protection Safety Net anchored by Child Protection Units
- ☀️ Supportive interventions in Government run Child Care Institutions (CCIs)
- ☀️ Networking and advocacy through Coalition for Child Right to Protection (CCRP)

Through these components, Praajak works with children in need of care and protection (CNCP), Children in Conflict with Law (CCL) and other vulnerable children as considered by The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act 2006 (hereafter referred as the JJ Act) and Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS, 2009). It partners with government and civil society actors to strengthen implementation of legislations, schemes and other instruments for upholding child rights in the country. It also seeks to bring emerging issues and concerns related to child protection on to the public agenda and to mobilize actions that can ultimately aid the transition to a more child friendly and gender equitable society.

Locations of Child Protection Components in West Bengal



MUKTANGAN

During 2015-2016, the programme focused on children living in and around railway stations in Malda, Asansol, Kharagpur and New Jalpaiguri in West Bengal. In total, 617 children came to the Mukttangan Drop In Centres and Night Shelters during the year. Children availed a range of services like education, health, nutrition and counselling support.

- Children attending the Mukttangan Centres were provided with non-formal education classes to promote functional literacy and numeracy and to facilitate enrolment in formal schools wherever possible. Subsequently, 36 children were enrolled in formal schools in Malda, Asansol, Kharagpur and New Jalpaiguri.
- To meet the nutritional needs of children, hot meals were served twice a day to 617 children at the four Drop in Centres in Malda, Asansol, Kharagpur and New Jalpaiguri throughout the year.
- Praajak supported 54 children in moving beyond a life at the railway stations. Half of these children were reunified with their families while the remaining was referred to CClS.
- Manorath- The on the move mobile library programme was made available for children accessing centres in Asansol and Malda to promote functional literacy and develop reading skills.



Mithun Kumar @ Noor Alam, 15 years has been with us since he was 12. In the beginning he was irregular at the Drop-In Centre and did not show much interest in either studies or other activities. However he would like to be neat and clean and would try to impress senior project staff by saying that he was actually quite interested to study but that he was not being given an opportunity by DIC teachers.

After few months of trying to facilitate his interactions within the DIC he was referred for a Self Book session because he was quite irregular at the DIC and the Night Shelter. In the meantime he had also built himself a reputation of being a “mobile thief” and some Muktangon boys alleged that Mithun had stolen their mobiles at night. After the Self Book sessions he was referred to Play Therapy.

The sessions revealed that Mithun had gender identity confusions. He would often identify himself with women and girls. He did not want to go back home as it was clear that he used to face a lot of violence for his atypical gender behaviour. However he said he wanted to go to school and learn how to dance. He was admitted to Standard III and now has been promoted to Standard IV. He has also been admitted to a dance school where he has been going regularly. He has now requested to be put in a CCI under long term care as long as he can continue his studies and dance classes.

CHILD PROTECTION UNITS

Child Protection Units consisting of women and youth members at the community level remain uniquely positioned to prevent, track as well as respond to child protection violations. This understanding has guided Praajak in its efforts aimed at building capacities of local stakeholders and developing a community based safety net for children. In the rural context, specific areas prone to trafficking, unsafe migration and child labour have been covered (source locations). Urban areas have also been gradually included under this initiative.

CPUs in urban areas

- **Darjeeling:**
Siliguri
- **Bardhaman:**
Asansol-
Raniganj
- **Kolkata:**
Kolkata
- **Paschim
Medinipur:**
Kharagpur
- **Malda:**
English Bazar-
Old Malda

CPUs in rural areas

- **Jalpaiguri :** Kaurgram, Alipurduar-I, Alipurduar-II, Birpara-Madarihat, Falakata, Jalpaiguri Sadar, Kalchini
- **Uttar Dinajpur :** Raiganj, Goalpokhor-II
- **Dakshin Dinajpur :** Gangarampur, Balurghat
- **Malda:** Chanchal I, Chanchal II, Harishchandrapur I & II, Kaliachak-I, English Bazar, Old Malda, Manikchak
- **Murshidabad:** Farakka, Beldanga, Berhampur
- **Birbhum:** Nalhati-I, Rampurhat -I
- **Paschim Medinipur:** Kharagpur-I, Jhargram, Gopiballavpur and Sankrai
- **Bankura:** Bishnupur, Onda
- **Purulia:** Purulia I
- **Coochbehar:** Tufangunj II
- **South 24 Parganas:** Mathurapur I, Mathurapur II, Kulpi, Joynagar, Mograhat II
- **Nadia:** Krishnagar-I, Ranaghat
- **Hooghly:** Pandua and Singur

SUPPORTIVE INTERVENTIONS IN GOVERNMENT RUN CCIS

The underlying emphasis has been on helping the CCIs and other related stakeholders in enhancing the standards of care at the institutions. This includes supporting measures for building a child friendly environment at CCIs with comprehensive and integrated programming which would, ultimately, facilitate appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration for CNCP and CCL entrusted to their care. The intervention aims at supporting 10 government run CCIs in West Bengal in enhancing the child friendly environment including care services. Praajak focuses on promoting integrated case management of the children for their holistic development.

- 399 adolescent girls and 806 adolescent boys were covered through initiatives on developing life skills, educational support, library activities, vocational training for children with special needs and training on sexual and reproductive health and hygiene.
- Children were encouraged to express their feelings and concerns through Moner Kotha (a drop box based system of sharing and discussion)
- 180 teachers in schools on CCI premises trained on improved class management.
- Facilitated linkages with Rastriya Bal Suraksha Karyakram which led to health camps in six CCIs.
- Supported infrastructural improvements such as water tank cleaning, water testing and cleaning (in liaison with Public Health Engineering Department) and repairing toilet doors.



Praajak continues to support Child Welfare Committees in 12 districts of West Bengal in improving their capacities and functioning. Collective efforts have helped strengthen collaboration between various stakeholders, adherence to Juvenile Justice norms and restoration of children.

During 2015 -16, ten CCI were covered. Overall, 321 children in six CCIs for boys and 158 children in four CCIs for girls were covered.

No	Name of the CCI	District	Children covered
1	Sahid Bandana Smriti Mahila Abas	Cooch Behar	Girls (CNCP)
2	Shilayan Home for Girls	Murshidabad	Girls (CNCP)
3	Ananda Ashram	Murshidabad	Boys (CCL)
4	Kaji Najrul Islam Shishu Abas	Murshidabad	Boys (CNCP)
5	Kishalaya Home for Boys	North 24 Parganas	Boys (CNCP and CCL)
6	Dhrubashram	North 24 Parganas	Boys (CCL)
7	Korok	Jalpaiguri	Boys (CNCP and CCL)
8	Shubhayan	Dakshin Dinajpur	Boys (CNCP and CCL)
9	Sukanya	North 24 Parganas	Girls (CNCP)
10	Vidya Sagar Balika Bhavan	Paschim Midnapore	Girls (CNCP)

Sanatan grew up in a difficult environment without a mother and with an abusive father. He was living with an elder brother before the police brought him to Korak home in Jalpaiguri. Since childhood, Sanatan took great interest in football. He participated actively in pada (hamlet) football and often got beaten up at home for his love for the sport. Sanatan is well versed about the world of football. In Self Book, he pasted David Beckham's photo and narrated, 'this is Beckham, a football star from England and the current coach for Manchester United.' Sanatan talked to us about the football coaching in Jalpaiguri's FEDC club and requested us to speak to the home's super for his admission there.

Identifying the child's need we bring this up at the next monthly meeting with the CWC, DCPS, DSWO, other NGOs, Childline and the Superintendent of the home. We pointed out in the meeting that how through case management this particular need of the child was identified. Initially the P.O. NIC from the DCPS spoke strongly against our recommendation. His suggestion was the coach should be called to the home so that the other residents also get an opportunity. We did not give up and continued to push the discussion about the Individual Care Plan. Now, Sanatan and his other friends from Korak home are participating in various league footballs. Recently they participated in the league organized in Kolkata.

ANTARIKSHA

Praajak is working towards making a gender discrimination free society where both male and female can work against the deep rooted patriarchal system to ensure their rights. With this objective, Praajak has organised gender and sexuality workshop with 240 volunteers from different district of West Bengal so that they can intervene in the family and community to ensure gender equity. After these workshops the volunteers realised the need of raising the issue and they have started talking about the issue in their community. They are conducting awareness on gender issues for the common people especially youth of their locality through discussions, rally, workshops etc.

“ I got to know about gender issues about one and half years ago from Praajak and I have changed some of my thinking and behaviour. For example, I used to think that the household work should be done by the females and the outside work should be done by the males. But I was wrong. Now I do household works. I perform theatre on gender issues in my village, conduct training with the young boys, and initiate discussion with the community members. For example, as a part of the Astami ritual of Durga Puja, males were expected to bring the evening pradip. Some of us went there and told the females ‘If the males can do this, females can also do. You also have the right to participate in the religious and cultural programme like males’. That time they brought the evening pradip of Astami for the first time.
– Anirban Haldar (volunteer)

COALITION FOR CHILD'S RIGHT TO PROTECTION

The coalition is a unique attempt to mobilise support of likeminded groups and individuals for protecting rights of children living under vulnerable conditions in urban slums and remote rural areas in the state. It provides a platform for bringing together youth groups, women's groups and other civil society organisations for collective action.

During 2015 -16 the networking initiative helped to rope in 30 cultural groups and 370 volunteers from colleges to fight violence against children and protect their rights. Moreover, the coalition played in an instrumental role in the following activities.

Abhay Yatra and Muktheadhwani, two campaigns were organized to promote child protection and encourage actions against gender based violence and discrimination in the state. Cultural groups and 151 children and youth, including girls and boys from Berhampur based Kazi Nazrul Islam Children's Home and Shilayan After Care Home For Girls, participated. More than 1,000 audiences from various sections of the society pledged to fight violence against children and women. The cultural performances also gave children a chance to explore and express their



artistic potential with guidance from reputed artists of Kolkata and Berhampur.

Four one day campaigns, titled Shishu Suraksha Utsav, were organized across four districts in the state. Overall, 11,00 children participated. Besides children,

community members, CPUs and other stakeholders were brought on a common platform wherein information on RTE, RTI, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 with amendments 2006 and 2011 (JJ Act) were shared.

Subsequently, volunteers across the districts admitted 1267 children in schools, this included children who had never been to school and drop outs. Also, enthused by the Shishu Suraksha Utsav, 65 new members joined the coalition.

WAY FORWARD



OUR GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS FOR THE YEAR 2015 – 16

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DONOR AGENCIES

- CRY
- Railway Children UK
- Food for Hungry Foundation
- Terre des hommes Foundation
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation
- UNICEF, Assam
- UNICEF, West Bengal

STATUTORY BODIES

- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
- State Commission for Protection of Child Rights
- Child Welfare Committees of West Bengal
- Juvenile Justice Boards of West Bengal
- District Legal Aid Service Authority

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

- National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata
- Jaya Prakash Institute of Social Change, Kolkata
- Global Institute of Social Science, Kolkata
- Durgapur Law College, Rajbandh
- Malda Women's College

NETWORKS

- Disability Activists Forum
- West Bengal Education Network
- Sanyukta Santan Seva Samity

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

- Department of Women and Child Development, Government of West Bengal
- Department of Home and F&NRI, Government of West Bengal
- Department of Health, Government of West Bengal
- Indian Railways
- Railway Protection Force
- Government Railway Police Force
- Kolkata Police
- Siliguri City Police
- Asansol- Durgapur City Police
- West Bengal Police
- Sarva Shiksha Mission, West Bengal
- Eastern Railway Women's Welfare Organisation- Malda, Asansol, Kharagpur
- Siliguri Municipal Corporation
- Asansol Municipal Corporation
- South DumDum Municipality
- English Bazar Municipality
- Kharagpur Municipality
- Gram Panchayats across 10 districts of West Bengal

MEDIA

- 24 Ghanta
- Akash Bangla
- Tara Bangla
- Aajkal
- Protidin
- Bartaman
- Dainik Jagaran
- Uttarbanga Sanbad, North Bengal
- Amar Kagoj, Kharagpur
- Din Khon, Asansol
- Aaj Sandha, Asansol
- Industrial Organ, Asansol
- Amar Cable, New Jalpaiguri
- Sabar Cable, Malda
- Malda Cable, Malda
- Balurghat Cable Network

NGOs

- Kolkata Sanved, Kolkata
- Sanchar, Kolkata
- Human Rights Law Network, West Bengal
- Goonj, Delhi
- Samiksani, Kolkata
- Bangladesh National Woman Lawyers Association, Dhaka
- CHILDLINE India Foundation, Kolkata
- Sikshamitra, Kolkata
- Institute of Quality Skill Training, Kolkata
- Sanchari Kala Kendra, Kolkata
- Satya Bharati, Hooghly
- Sundarban Social Development Center, South 24 Parganas
- SPAR, Balurghat
- Talaash, Kolkata
- Shreyasi, Durgapur
- Diksha, Kolkata
- Swayam, Kolkata
- Shelter of Malda, English Bazar
- Jalpaiguri Mahila Kalyan Samity, Jalpaiguri
- Beldanga Sabujayan Sangha, Beldanga
- Thoughtshop Foundation, Kolkata
- Sanjog
- CINI
- CONC'RN, Siliguri
- The Calcutta Samaritans, Kolkata
- Banglanatak
- Ashoka India
- Sabuj Sathi Sangha, Malda
- Trickle Up, Kolkata
- Pranjol, Siliguri
- Uttaran, Siliguri

CPU Members and Volunteers

- Ms Srabani Sen, Kolkata
- Ms Arna Seal, Kolkata
- Mr Srikanto Acharya, Kolkata
- Ms Jayanti Purkayastha, Kolkata
- Ms Dipika Halder, Kolkata
- Ms Bratati Bandyopadhyay, Kolkata
- Mr Monomoy Mukherjee, Kolkata
- Ms Jayati Chakraborty, Kolkata
- Mr Debamalya Chattopadhyay, Kolkata
- Ms Sreyashi Sen, Singapore
- Mr Rahul (Vicky) Banerjee, Siliguri
- Mr Chinmoy Mondol, Siliguri
- Mr Subesh Poddar, Siliguri
- Ms Sayanti Ghatak, Siliguri
- Ms Rituparna Chatterjee, Naihati
- Mr Samik Chatterjee, Kolkata
- Mr Uday Bhattacharya, Kolkata
- Ms Debarati Goswami, Malda
- Ms Anwesha Chatterjee, Malda
- Mr Tushar Kanti Ghosh, Principal, Railway School, Asansol
- Dr Arunabha Sengupta, Asansol
- Ms Sharmila Banerjee, Muktabihanga, Asansol
- Ms Abhinanda Bandyopadhyay, Malancha, Asansol
- Mr Manish Saraf, Ujjevan Healthcare, Raniganj
- Mr Sabyasachi Dutta, Srishti Mime, Jalpaiguri
- Ms Bipasha Das, PRICE, Berhampore
- Mr Sandipan Banerjee, Spandan, Berhampore
- Mr Utpal Debnath, Sabujayan Sangha, Beldanga
- Mr Sukrit Nath, Berhampore
- Mr Prasun Banerjee, Chhandik Dance Academy, Barasat
- Ms Swapna Chakraborty, Ankush Kala Bhawan, Barasat
- Ms Rina Singha Roy, Abir Nrityalay, Balurghat
- Mr Debanuj Dasgupta, Columbus, Ohio
- Ms Yuveka Singh, New Delhi
- Ms Khushboo Jain, New Delhi
- Ms Anuradha Mukherjee, Kolkata
- Ms Soumi Banerjee, Chandannagar
- Mr Ved Prakash Gautam, Guwahati
- Mr Abhishek, Kolkata
- Ms Tapati Sengupta, Kolkata
- Ms Rita Ray, Sanchari Kala Kendra, Kolkata

- Ms Angana Dutta, Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College, Kolkata
- Mr Bhaskar Gupta, Kolkata
- Mr Saumitra Chakraborty, Kolkata
- Ms Sharmila Sarkar, Malda
- Ms Atasi Pandit, Bharatanjali, Malda
- Ms Krishna Guha, Mada Women's College, Malda
- Ms Tomali Bhattacharya, Malda
- Mr Paresh Das, Malda
- Ms Nandita Saha, Nupur Nrityangan
- Mr Sumit Bandyopadhyay, Udan, Asansol
- Mr Aroop Ray, Art of Living, Asansol
- Ms Ratna Bhattacharya, Vivekananda Patha Chakra, Asansol
- Ms Subhra Sil, Vivekananda Patha Chakra, Asansol
- Mr Kaushik Biswas, Lion's Club, Asansol
- Ms Rwitaja Banerjee, Chittaranjan
- Mr Subir Roy Chowdhury, Kharagpur
- Dr Indranil Kulavi, Kharagpur
- Ms Subhra Maji, Kharagpur
- Mr Avik Chakraborty, Alkap, Kharagpur
- Mr Abhijit Chatterjee, Kharagpur
- Mr Biswajit Roy, Banomala, Siliguri
- Ms Rajashi Majumdar, Siliguri
- Ms Arati Banerjee, Siliguri
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