

## **“Creating a Child Friendly Environment and Developing the Teaching Learning Process by Using the CRC in the Kimbulapitiya Maha Vidyalaya of the Western Province in Sri Lanka”**

W.A.Wijethunga - N.A.T.P.Kulathilake - Dishanthini Thiyageshwaran

Team Mentor: Agneta Wångdahl Flinck

Batch 5

### **Summary of the project**

Our project is an attempt to create a ‘Child-Friendly Learning Environment’ and to develop the use of the CRC in the teaching and learning process in Kimbulapitiya Maha Vidyalaya situated in the Western province of Sri Lanka. In order to improve the education quality, we endeavour to improve the learning environment of marginalized students in Kimbulapitiya Maha Vidyalaya. Our main objectives are to facilitate the access to education, to ameliorate the quality of secondary education, improve the learning outcomes and develop higher-order transferable skills.

During our visits to the school, we conducted training for teachers and students informing them about the CRC and the implications of its implementation in schools. We also improved the outdoor environment of the school, together with the contribution of students and teachers. When we started the project, the outdoor environment of the school was inadequate and almost dangerous. We contacted various organisations in order to obtain donations of educational materials. This constituted a big contribution to the student life.

The follow-up seminar in Vietnam, the support and visit of our mentors and the interaction with other participants from all around the world contributed a lot to our efforts in the improvement of the quality of education, the development of our managerial and technical skills in the field of rights-based approach, and the fulfillment of our project objectives. Moreover, the Child Rights and School Management Program gave us an outline on the diversity of children perspectives and taught us some new information on the rights-based approach.

### **Impact on the personal and professional levels**

#### **W.A. Wejethunga**

##### **Personal level**

- I had the opportunity to gain knowledge on Child Rights. I learnt how to integrate this knowledge in the classroom. And at the same time, I collected lots of documents about the CRC. I am now well aware of the role the CRC has in changing classroom climate; improvement of teacher-student relationships and the teaching/learning process.

- I learnt how to develop leadership skills, how to delegate responsibilities and how to expand the space of action.
- Something I found very interesting was the concept of "The Best Interest of the Child," this motivated me to work hard on the implementation of the CRC in schools.
- Personally, I have changed my behaviour, especially in the work that I conduct with others.

### **Professional level**

- As a Deputy Director of Education, this program was a marvellous opportunity to develop my professional career. I have now been selected as a national trainer to conduct seminars and workshops with regards to the development of teachers, principals and officers.
- Meanwhile, the knowledge of the CRC has gained importance in my annual plan at the ministry, and I definitely use this knowledge in my professional work.

### **N .A. T. P. Kulathilake**

#### **Personal level**

- It was a great opportunity: to strengthen my working skills, knowledge and good practice, to share experiences and ideas with participants from other countries and to learn about good leadership skills through the program.
- Through the program, I received information to develop my personal research on "Child labour in Sri Lanka" which is going to be published in mid 2008.

#### **Professional level**

- I got the opportunity to discuss the matter with my other colleagues who worked as child rights promotion officers in different departments.
- I did several presentations for teachers, parents, students and public officers on how to establish a child-friendly learning environment in schools and at home among family members.
- I worked as a visiting lecturer and as a trainer for university students, school principals, and provincial and rural child protection committee members. The topics were related to the importance of the CRC in Sri Lanka, compulsory education, prevention of child abuse, drug abuse and domestic violence against women and children.
- I was selected by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services as a committee member to make the action plan for the year 2008.

- I received more opportunities to participate in national and international trainings and workshops regarding child rights.

## **Dishanthini Thiyageshwaran**

### **Personal level**

- It was a great opportunity for me to work with a multicultural team and learn about different cultural issues and strategies. I also got the chance to compare and share our experience with participants from other countries.
- Regarding my work for the protection and the safeguard of children's rights, my self-confidence was dramatically improved. I also learnt strategies to know what is in the best interest of the child.
- I established a good communication network with different Sida change agents from all around the world.

### **Professional level**

- This program not only helped me to develop my managerial and technical skills, but also my programming skills on the rights-based approach of child rights.
- I contributed to the training of a number of key persons and community leaders that have worked for child rights and child protection in past years.
- I gave presentations to different community leaders, key policy makers, and donors both at the national and international levels in order to make them increase their commitment in the promotion and protection of child rights and for the improvement of their education. I tried to encourage them to be more accountable and take responsibility in that regard. Therefore, I gain professional respect from the community and International stakeholders.
- I increased my network and shared my experience with international partners, including Sida, on methodological issues related to children.
- Together with our board members and stakeholders, we develop a strategy on the importance of institutional change of formal laws and policies as well as informal norms and values, such as the development of a democratic culture and the need for environmental awareness.

### **Impact on the organizational level**

Our project has been converted to a “child friendly school” project. We discussed with principals, teachers and other community members in order to create a child friendly learning environment. We organized an awareness program on child rights, and also child labour, during the universal children's day in 2007. We arranged a recycling management program, which was sponsored by the

Department of Probation and Child Care Services and some other stakeholders.

Moreover, the Peace Education Unit of the Ministry of Education has selected 500 schools to implement the CRC special program for teachers and students. The peace education unit has now sent a circular to implement this program at the school level. Many schools have already started to organize student parliaments.

We expanded this implementation program to other schools by introducing them to our project. We have now received many invitations from policy makers, administrative officers, community development officers, parents and teachers associations and school clubs in order to present our project.

### **Impact on the country level**

The Department of Probation and Child Care Services:

- Created a new website regarding child rights in Sri Lanka.
- Implemented the CRC-based model in 300 villages located all over the country.
- Created children clubs in each village and councils for children in the provinces.
- Organized children parliament activities in each Divisional Secretariat area of the country.
- Created child protection clubs in every school with the contribution of the Child Protection Authority in Sri Lanka.
- Established with the contribution of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment a "hot-line 1929" with regards to children's rights violations.

The National Integration and Peace Education- Ministry of Education:

Introduced a Peace Education Policy framework with special focus on the CRC.

### **Spin-off effects of the project**

Through the carrying-out of the project, we identified the following effects:

- We found that many organisations are ready to support our successful project.
- It was the first time that a foreign delegate visited the school in which we conducted the project, and this was highly appreciated by the staff, students and parents.
- Many donor agencies supported the development of our project.
- Daily attendance in our school has improved.

- The relationship between the teachers and students has improved and is therefore more effective.
- Corporal punishment has been suppressed.
- The number of situations involving conflict among students has decreased.
- New activities for the incoming generation have been initiated.