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With much excitement and enthusiasm, Plan India held its first ever Children's Literary Festival (Apr 27-29, 2018) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

The festival saw participation from more than 250 children along with industry experts and stakeholders. Over the course of three days, there were numerous engaging activities conducted including peer sharing and learning amongst children, plenary sessions were held with inspiring speeches from notable guests and activity sessions were curated for child participants using contests, games, literature and art. In addition, all nine states set up their own pavilions to showcase the response of children to the challenges and issues they face in life. Most notably, a 'Children's Charter' was released on the final day with suggestions from children on how to improve their educational experience and including gender equal and gender transformative content in their textbooks.

In the run up to the festival, over 116,300 children from more than 770 schools across India participated in gender-focused reading, writing, telling and acting activities at the field and state level.

The Children's Literary Festival is Plan India's initiative to create an annual platform for children to discover the joy of reading and reimagine gender in textbooks, stories and images. It enables and engages children to play a central role in ensuring that girls and boys are able to learn, lead, decide and thrive through advocacy with educationists, policy makers, teachers, writers, story-tellers and publishers.



Children and staff from Telangana at their pavilion



Ranjan Chak, Plan India Board Member visiting a pavilion



AN UPDATE FROM UTTAR PRADESH

40 DAY CAMPAIGN PLEDGES TO END CHILD MARRIAGE IN UTTAR PRADESH



Launching the project with state ministers

Plan India, in partnership with the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) and Government of Uttar Pradesh (GoUP) initiated the 'Bal Vivah: Abhi Nahin, Kabhi Nahin' campaign to re-inforce the importance of ending child marriage and to promote child marriage-free Gram Panchayats in the state. A key aspect of the campaign was to promote legal awareness on child marriage as provisioned under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA 2006).

The campaign was launched on Jan 23, 2018 from the office of Rita Bahuguna Joshi, Hon'ble Cabinet Minister, DWCD and GoUP and covered seven blocks in five districts of Uttar Pradesh. Overall, 243 Gram Panchayats and 189 schools and colleges were reached including more than 2.15 lakh individuals from different sections of society. One of the most significant outcomes of the campaign was that 131 Gram Panchayats in Plan programme areas have pledged to make their Gram Panchayats child marriage free.

CAPACITY BUILDING OF 'SWACHHAGRAHIS'



Capacity building session underway in Uttar Pradesh

Plan India is a Key Resource Centre for the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MBWS). On behalf of the MBWS, a hands-on training session on Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) was organised in March for 82 village level functionaries or 'Swachhagrahis' appointed by the Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin in Kasganj, Uttar Pradesh.

Open defecation is a rampant issue in the area, necessitating behaviour change from the ground up. With this in mind, a training session was organised for leaders from four villages and village micro level plans were prepared and implemented in each village to ensure Open Defecation Free status is achieved and maintained. Village-level Vigilance Committees or 'Nigrani Samitis' were also formed with involvement from children, youth, women and men residing in different wards. There was an overwhelming response from children who played a key role in convincing their parents and communities to stop defecating in the open and participate in daily rallies to reinforce the importance of improved sanitation and hygiene for better health.



ROUND TABLE CONSULTATION ON GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

As part of the Girls Advocacy Alliance project, a two-day state level round table consultation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) was held on April 22-23. The consultation was organised in partnership with the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) and Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam with approximately 50 participants in attendance. Speakers at the conference included Hon'ble Ganta Hymavathi, Chairperson, SCPCR, Prof. V. Uma Rector, Prof. K. Anuradha and Prof. P. Vijayalakshmi from Sri Padmavathi Mahila among others.

The conference reviewed the Prohibition of Child Marriages Act 2006 [G.O Ms. No. 13 (Andhra Pradesh state rules for the prohibition of child marriages)] and discussed incidences and prevalence of child marriage in their respective districts along with the best practices on preventing the same. As part of the consultation, the participants were divided into three groups and were required to develop guidelines on Prevention, Rescue (Protection and Rehabilitation) and Prosecution. On Day 2, all three groups presented their recommendations and points were resolved after an engaging brain storming session. The recommendations of this round table conference will be submitted to the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

SWACHH BHARAT SWACHH VIDYALAYA SUPPORTED SCHOOL RECEIVES GOVERNMENT AWARD

Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Achyutarama Primary School in Vishakhapatnam was awarded the State level Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar 2017-18 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Ms. Padmavathi, Principal, Achyutarama Primary School received the award from Ganta Srinivas Rao, Honourable Minister of Human Resource Development on the occasion of World Water Day (March 22).

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation Achyutarama Primary School is one of 20 schools that is being maintained by the Plan India, USAID and Coca-Cola supported Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya project in Andhra Pradesh. Since the project was implemented in the school, enrolment has increased to 147 students. There has also been notable improvement in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in the school. In addition, large scale awareness campaigns have also been conducted with children, teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) members.

Through the Swachh Bharat Swachh Vidyalaya project, 60 schools and three slum areas in Dehradun, Pune and Visakhapatnam are being supported. The project aims to capacitate students, teachers, SMCs, government functionaries and communities on sustainable management of WASH facilities.

In 2016, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India introduced the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar to recognise, inspire and celebrate excellence in sanitation and hygiene practice in schools.



Ms. Padmavathi receiving the Swachh Vidyalaya Award



AN UPDATE FROM MAHARASHTRA

PROMOTING INTEGRATED COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION

The Sahyog project, implemented in Maharashtra, has been supporting mothers and children in 22 tribal hamlets located in Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

As part of the project, a series of 12 'Health Marker Days' were organised in Borivali and Goregaon (Mumbai). The events were facilitated by medical and paramedical teams, nutritionists, etc. with over 600 participants. Additionally, the Department of Health and Family Welfare provided vaccines, medicine and treatment for various health issues. Helpline numbers for emergency services and innovative communication materials were also displayed on these days.

The campaign has led to an increase in awareness and knowledge on critical health related issues and improved health seeking behaviour in the villages. It is expected that this will also help reduce the incidences of communicable diseases as well as educate adolescent girls and boys on reproductive health.

WALKING TO CREATE AWARENESS ON WASH



Children participating in a rally to promote better hygiene

As part of the Sahyog project, Plan India, along with its grassroots partners, organised a 'Walkathon' on Feb 12. The four kilometre walk, conducted with community members from Borivali and Goregaon (Mumbai) aimed to spread awareness on cleanliness, handwashing, sanitation and personal hygiene.

There was active participation from women who carried placards with messages on keeping the surroundings clean. During the walk, garbage disposal mechanisms were flagged by them and issues surrounding sanitation and hygiene were also highlighted. They commented that the main cause for the spread of garbage was the absence of facilities for waste collection and disposal. Being that the situation was grave, a signature campaign was also

organised to demand for the installation of dustbins in the area and for garbage to be collected regularly by the local authorities. The petition was submitted to Forest Department officials to take appropriate measures to address the issues.

Significant changes have been observed after the walk with local residents now conscious of keeping their surroundings clean and throwing their waste in garbage bins. They are also aware of the basic civic amenities that are available to them.



AN UPDATE FROM JHARKHAND

LEARNING ABOUT HYGIENE IN SCHOOL

Kalamati School in Khunti district, Jharkhand has 672 students all eager to continue their education and make certain a brighter future for themselves. To ensure this is a possibility, Plan India has been supporting the school through numerous activities conducted with the students, teachers and School Management Committee. In addition, a Children's Cabinet was also established and children were oriented on School WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene).

The Children's Cabinet has been very active in ensuring hygiene lessons are regularly taught in classes. With support from the teachers, hygiene checks are conducted after the morning assembly every day. Students also take a pledge to use the toilets and handwash with soap after each meal, defecation and during a bath.

To further support the students, the school has purchased nail cutters, soaps, mirrors and combs to ensure every child is clean and dressed appropriately. Daily cleaning of drinking water storage and filters, filling of water tanks, cleaning of toilets, etc. are also the responsibilities of the Children's Cabinet along with preparing and implementing a WASH plan for the school.

All this has led to the school being nominated for the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar, an initiative by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. A remarkable achievement considering the primary leaders of change have been children!

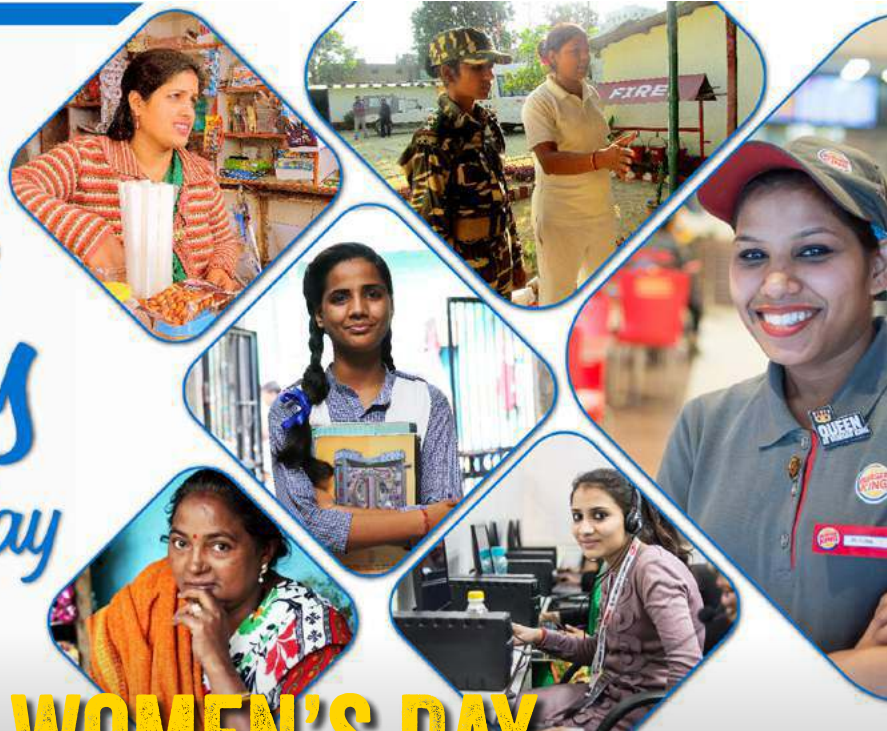


A sanitation monitor conducting a hygiene check

International Women's Day

CELEBRATING

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



To mark International Women's Day, Plan India, along with the Delegation of the European Union (EU) to India and the Embassy of Finland (on behalf of all 28 EU member states), jointly initiated a 10-day digital campaign on gender equality, wage parity and equal access to opportunities for women and girls.

The campaign highlighted factors inhibiting women in urban and rural areas from playing a bigger role in the economy and focused on the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment within families and outside.

Across their digital platforms, Plan India and the Diplomatic Missions promoted thought-provoking content and engaged a wide audience. Opinions, inputs and questions were sought from the online audience for an hour-long Facebook Live panel discussion on March 7.

Panellists Bhagyashri Dengle, Executive Director, Plan India; Tomasz Kozlowski, Ambassador of the EU to India; Nina Vaskunlahti, Ambassador of Finland to India and Nisha, a member of Plan India's Banking on Change programme spoke on the theme 'Women and Economic Empowerment' during the Facebook Live session moderated by Aparna Vedapuri, Founder and CEO, Women's Web. They exchanged experiences and lessons learned in India and Europe. The Live Session garnered over 7,300 views and reached more than 22,000 people.

The campaign reached over 200,000 people overall thus reaffirming Plan India's commitment to enabling girls' and women's rights to a life of their own choosing.



Participants of the Facebook Live session after the event

SUCCESS STORIES

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS FOR GIRLS



Palika is 20 years old and lives in a rural village in Bihar. She is an active and well known youth champion.

Palika's association with Plan India began eight years ago when she joined a Children's Club. She explained that before joining the club, she was very shy to speak out, "Whatever I was facing, I thought it was part of my life. Afterwards, I realised that this was not part of my life and these were issues that had to be overcome."

In Bihar, girls are generally married off at an age when they are unable to bear the marital and childbearing responsibilities put upon them. Her village is particularly isolated, surrounded by mountains with only around 35 households. Additionally, due to the lack of educational and livelihood opportunities, child labour, child marriage and child trafficking are constant issues. Palika felt impelled to tackle the issue of child marriage in her community.

She managed to get support from her friends and the Plan Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). Palika went from door to door advocating for girls' rights. Inevitably, she faced many challenges from her community - gender discrimination was so prevalent that her village would not listen to what she had to say. At 14 years, her own parents decided that they wanted to get her married but she raised her voice and successfully fought against their decision. Since then, she has worked with district officials and through ChildLine (1098 tele helpline for nationwide support to children in distress), even prevented 12 child marriages!

Palika also found support from Dainik Jagran, one of India's most read newspapers, who covered her story. ETV Bihar, a news channel also decided to report on her efforts through a story that reached a large audience. In 2015, Palika was elected as a state representative for the National Youth Advisory Panel.

Despite having already achieved so much and bringing about so much positivity, Palika wants to do more. "I want to dedicate my life to bring about change!" she says with confidence and determination.

PLAYING FOR EQUALITY

Touch Rugby is a game derived from rugby football in which players do not tackle each other but instead touch their opponents using their hands on any part of the body, clothing or the ball. In Plan India's Safer Cities for Girls programme, the sport is used to enhance gender equality, encourage girls' participation and more importantly, claim back and have equal access to public spaces. In Mangolpuri, New Delhi, Plan India... [Read more](#)



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

[Economic Times - A roadmap to empower girls and women to become economically independent](#)

[Free to Be - Plan India launches free to be - an online city safety map for girls and young women](#)

[IANS - Plan India, Delegation of the European Union and Embassy of Finland Celebrate International Women's Day 2018 in India under the theme Economic Empowerment of Women](#)

Hindi Clip - Lucknow



Business Standard



About Plan India

Plan India is a nationally registered not for profit organisation striving to advance children's rights and equality for girls, thus creating a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children and their communities.

Since 1979, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children and young people by enabling them access to protection, quality education and healthcare services, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives.

Plan India is a member of the Plan International Federation, an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International is active in more than 70 countries.

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