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Handbook, Module & Guidelines on Safe Childhood Programme for Gram Panchayats Released

A Handbook along with Module & Guidelines on protection of Child Rights at Gram Panchayat level was released jointly by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Ministry of Panchayati Raj and UNICEF at New Delhi today. The Handbook, Module & Guidelines will be useful for the functionaries of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in protecting the rights of children at the village level.

Releasing the Handbook, Secretary of Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Shri Jitendra Shankar Mathur called it as a landmark occasion. He said, "Unless and until communities are involved, making a difference in the lives of children at the village level is an uphill task." Shri. Mathur also said that the beneficial legislations which are available in the country should be implemented in reality to empower the children of the country. He suggested that the initiative by NCPCR and UNICEF should be "pursued vigorously" for quick outcomes.

NCPCR Chairperson, Smt. Stuti Kacker, who spoke about the importance of community support which was available in earlier times said that today, with changing socio-economic conditions, children are not always safe. Therefore, she said, involvement of Gram Panchayats will go a long way for a safe and secure childhood. Smt. Kacker said keeping that in view, the Handbook, Module & Guidelines have been prepared in collaboration with UNICEF.

Highlighting that children migrate towards cities because they feel cities have luxuries and better opportunities, NCPCR Member Smt. Rupa Kapoor said the idea of community participation is to retain children in villages. Child-friendly Panchayats or Bal

Panchayats, recreational activities for children at the Panchayat level and vocational training for children to make a livelihood for themselves are some of the additions proposed to be made to the already-existing Panchayat systems in the country. Stating that no new resources will be required for the initiative and mentioned that the Programme will be launched in 14 States initially (Andhra Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh) where State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have a proven track-record of initiatives pertaining to children and are strong and active in the field of Child Rights. The Programme will cover the entire country later.

Stating the importance of Panchayats in preventing incidences of child abuse and in protecting rights of children at the village level, Chief, Child Protection, UNICEF, Shri. Javier Aguilar, emphasized the need of mobilizing communities for trickling down of information on their rights and services to the children.

NCPCR Member Shri. Yashwant Jain and Member Secretary, Smt. Geeta Narayan, Chairpersons/Members of the 14 State Commissions were also present on the occasion.

Safe Childhood Programme will contribute in improving the current scenario related to health, development, education and protection of children. Children are vulnerable and subject to abuse and exploitation in day to day life. To counter it, this Handbook will help Panchayat Members and other stakeholders to understand their role and actions in protection of children at the village level resulting in better convergence of programmes and increased allocation of resources to address Child Right issues. NCPCR will receive reports on its implementation each month from the 14 States. After one year, the Commission will evaluate the impact and felicitate those States which achieve good results.



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