

Press Release – 7 October 2015

Towards Safe Spaces for Children in India

Mumbai

October 7th, 8th and 9th, 2015

As per the survey conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, over 50% of children are subjected to one or the other forms of abuse. Abuse and exploitation are wide spread in private and public spaces; homes, schools, orphanages, workplaces and streets are common places of abuse. Often children are enclosed in school and at home, enclosed by fear, by surveillance and poverty. Abuse and lack of safe spaces are harmful to the overall development of a child. It has lasting physical and psycho-social consequences. As per the Census 2011, children (below 18 years of age) constitute 39 percent of the total population. These statistics point to the need to engage on issues that affect children most extensively. Child abuse and the lack of safe spaces are pressing issues that affect children across class and region in India.

In this context, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) Mumbai in partnership with terre des hommes (TDH) Germany are organizing a National Workshop titled 'Towards Safe Spaces for Children in India' on October 7th, 8th and 9th.

The first two days are a residential workshop for children that will be held at the YUVA Centre in Kharghar (Navi Mumbai). 52 children from 12 states in India (urban and rural) between the age of 14 to 18 are attending this workshop. The workshop has two broad themes - child abuse and creating safe spaces for children. The sessions on October 7th titled 'What's Wrong? - Recognizing Abuse' and 'Breaking the Silence - Speaking up against abuse' are being conducted by Kavita Nair Bhatia and Smita Zanskar from Forum Against Child Sexual Exploitation (FACSE), an 18 year old open organization that has been involved in action and advocacy against child abuse. The sessions on October 8th titled 'Why fear? - Safe and Unsafe Spaces' and 'How can we make a change! Creating safe spaces within communities' are being conducted by Pramod Nigudkar and Vikas Sawant, senior child rights activists from Mumbai. Renowned artist Ranjit Dahiya of the Bollywood Art Project will be stroking his brushes through each session while listening to the voices of children on these issues. The workshop coincides with terre des hommes Germany completing 40 years of support to NGOs in India. This is part of a month long programme of event with children and youth in several parts of the country.

As an outcome of the workshop, on October 9th, children will release a 'Children's Declaration on Safe Spaces in India' at a public event at Y.B. Chavan Pratishthan, Nariman Point. This declaration will be handed over to the Women and Child Department at Mantralaya (the administrative head quarters of the state government of Maharashtra) by a delegation of children from the workshop. This declaration will be based on learning and discussions between children at the workshop. Government officials, Child Welfare Committee members, child rights activists and defenders of child rights will be joining this event to show solidarity with the Children's Declaration on Safe Spaces in India. There will be a cultural performance by youth from Malvani on the theme.

Event: Release of the 'Children's Declaration on Safe Spaces in India'

Date: 9 October 2015 | Time: 10 am to 1.30 pm | Venue: Rangswar Hall, Y.B. Chavan Pratishthan, Nariman Point, Opposite Mantralaya, Churchgate, Mumbai

Media Interaction: 1 pm with children, child rights activists and the organizers

Event: National Workshop 'Towards Safe Spaces for Children in India'

Date: October 7th, 8th 2015 | Time: 10 am to 6 pm | Venue: YUVA Centre, Plot 23, Sector 7 (behind Hiranandani complex), Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra

The schedule and concept note for the National Workshop and Public event are attached.

We sincerely request our friends in the Media to cover this event with the hope that more people are made aware of these pressing issues.