



PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN & YOUTH

As Part of Disaster Risk Reduction
and Health Programs

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Cover photo: Two participants, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, at the Indian Red Cross Society quiz competition on violence prevention.

7 Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement:
Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service,
Unity, Universality.

PREFACE

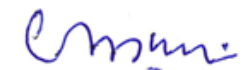
The Indian Red Cross Society works with local communities across our country with people of all backgrounds and beliefs. Whether in large cities or hard to reach rural areas, our volunteers help find solutions to the most pressing humanitarian problems. These problems include disaster preparedness and response, health services including blood banks, and youth led programs.

While it is often neglected or kept secret, the problem of violence against children is also a humanitarian risk in every corner of our country, and every country. Violence can take many forms but the impact is the same: girls and boys are hurt both physically and emotionally and the consequences can be felt for years, or even throughout a lifetime. This is made even worse by the persistent problem of discrimination against our girls. Too often they eat last, play less, and work more. Girls are told their dreams do not matter or they do not benefit from a full education, which is their right, because they are born as girls rather than boys.

This violence and discrimination is unacceptable. The Indian Red Cross Society has responded by taking action. This includes making violence prevention a “cross-cutting issue” in our national strategy. Also, in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, we have initiated a pilot project, in six districts of the state of Tamil Nadu, to make the prevention of violence against children a part of our disaster risk reduction and community health programs.

Volunteers have been working in villages and small towns to find local and culturally appropriate solutions, primary and middle schools have created child protection teams and safety rules, youth are leading peer education to other students, and the Ministry of Education and community leaders are providing their assistance. The results from these research-based efforts are proving successful, one step at a time. An external evaluation has shown that the understanding of violence has increased while the perception of risk has declined.

The Indian Red Cross Society believes there is nothing inevitable about violence against our children. It is time for all of us to keep alive our proud tradition of nonviolence, to join together, and to support children to have futures that are safe, equal and healthy.

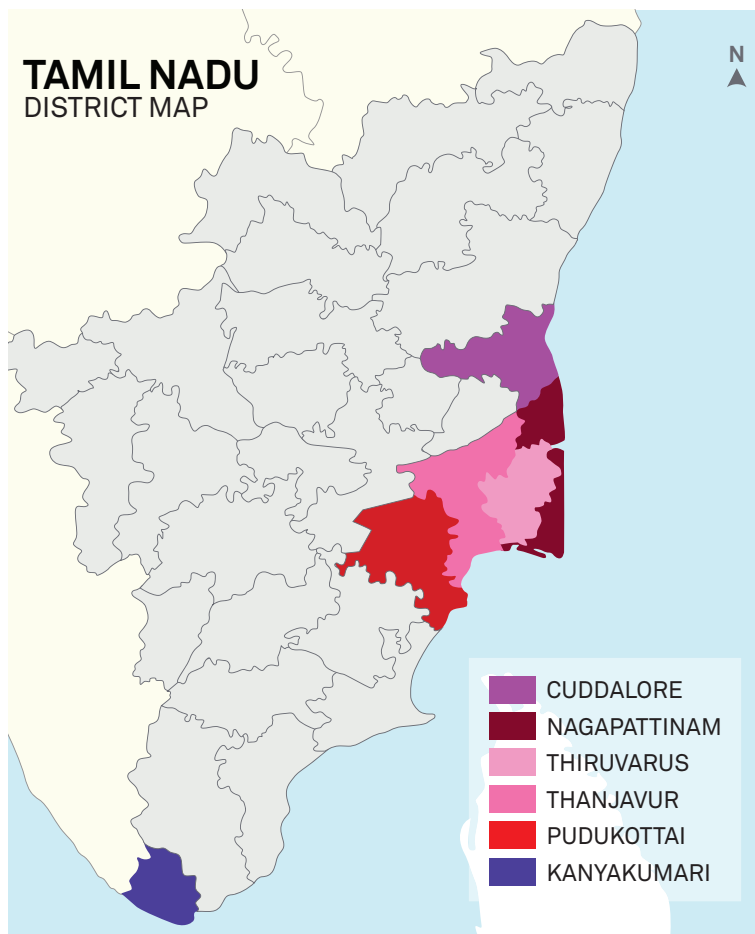

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BACKGROUND

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), in partnership with the Canadian Red Cross, has been working to prevent violence against children and to promote the rights of the girl child since 2008.

The Indian Red Cross has focused on integrating Violence Prevention (VP) and the rights of the girl child into its post-Tsunami disaster risk reduction and community based health promotion program in six districts with 29 villages in Tamil Nadu.

The integration has focused on youth leadership within schools through the Indian Red Cross Junior Red Cross curriculum. This includes:

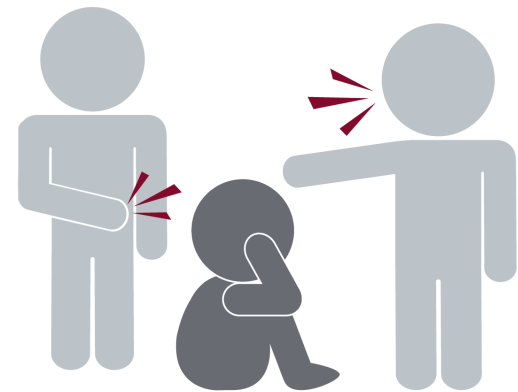
- ▣ child protection committees made up of teachers, police, parents and youth;
- ▣ school codes of conduct;
- ▣ education to parents;
- ▣ youth peer education, ages 13-17 years; and
- ▣ youth led competition on violence prevention knowledge and solutions.

Approximately 30,000 youth and 60,000 adults have been supported to find local solutions to violence against children and to promote the rights of girls.

THE PROBLEM

A NATIONAL SURVEY, INVOLVING OVER 17,000 CHILDREN AND ADULTS, BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA FOUND¹:

50% of children report **EMOTIONAL ABUSE**
66% of children report **PHYSICAL ABUSE**
53% of children report **SEXUAL ABUSE**



INDIA HAS OVER 400 MILLION CHILDREN **42%** of India's population are children

The literacy rate for **GIRLS** in India is **54%** (for **BOYS 75%**)²  There are **933 GIRLS** for every **1,000 BOYS**³

¹ Kacker, L., Varadan, S. & Kumar, P. (2007). Study on child abuse: India 2007. New Delhi: Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
² Government of India. (2004). National Charter for Children. Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development.
³ Unicef. (2007). Invisible to indivisible: Promoting and protecting the rights of the girl child. Unicef.

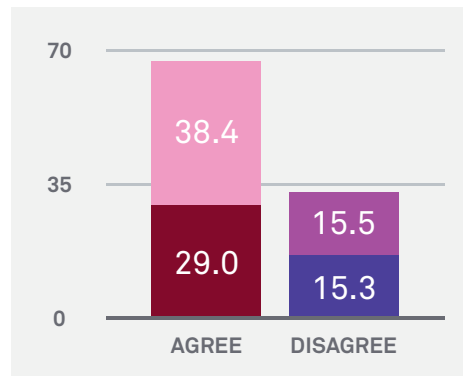
EVALUATION RESULTS

PERCEIVED CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIOUR

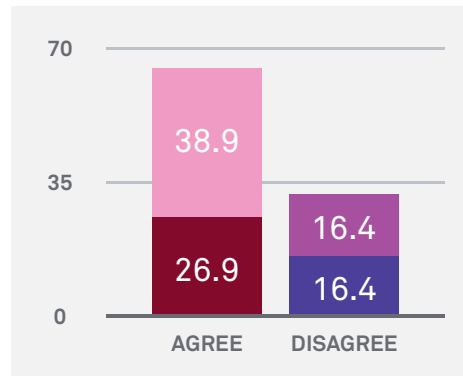
Results among adults

The evaluation found the project was a “resounding success for the violence prevention component [with adults].” Specifically, around two-thirds of adults indicated they changed their behaviour towards children, and that they know how and where to report concerns about violence against children.

“I know how and where to report concerns about violence against children as a result of IRCS programming.”



“I have changed my behaviour to being more nonviolent towards children as a result of IRCS programming.”



AGREE STRONGLY AGREE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

*“ The programme
has helped me see
everybody equally,
without any distinctions
of caste, class or creed”*

– Youth peer educator.

Results among youth

The evaluation found the school-based, youth-led elements of the project “is highly successful. Peer educators in particular have gained confidence and skills that exceed the anticipated program outcomes.”

One principal in Cuddalore district noted that “students have become very brave. They are bold and confident and willing to speak up. In training they are given a chance to speak, and this helps them become young leaders.” More generally, the program generated a strong positive impact on teachers and students’ knowledge and skills.

The evaluation also found, the importance of nonviolent behavior focused on the effects that violent behavior can have, including self-harm, low acceptance and self-esteem, and passing on of violent behaviour. In the schools there has been a strong focus on anti-bullying; in one of them, the Child Protection team made up of youth and adults, reported they had dealt with 25 cases of violent behaviour – including providing counseling to parents. According to the team, “now most parents are nonviolent.”

The Child Protection teams have also increased an understanding of gender equality. For example, the evaluation found more efforts have been made so that boys and girls should be given the same amount of food in their lunch box, and mothers have been encouraged to be more involved in the local Child Protection teams.

The Indian Red Cross Society, in Tamil Nadu, has now included preventing violence as a module within the state-wide Junior Red Cross curriculum. This will result in greater sustainability and a much wider reach.

TOOLS USED

The Violence Prevention project in Tamil Nadu has used a combination of Red Cross tools: the Community Based Health and First Aid (CBHFA) module for Violence Prevention, the “Be Safe!” module for schools, and the “Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments.”

CBHFA Violence Prevention Module



All children deserve to be safe.



This tool supports communities to understand the types of violence, populations at risk and local solutions to prevent violence.

Be Safe! Module for youth and teachers



This tool assists youth to deliver violence prevention messages and activities to other youth in schools.

Ten Steps to Creating Safe Environments



This tool supports organizations, like schools, to create protection systems to prevent violence and to respond when violence does happen.

CASE STUDY

In groups of three, youth huddle and whisper around school desks hoping others will not hear as they quietly debate. The air is heavy with tension as they search for answers before the timer rings. Over a hundred other youth and adults watch as the tension builds. This is not a routine school day, in fact, the students, eighteen in total, have come from six districts across the state of Tamil Nadu to the capital city of Chennai to participate in an India Red Cross youth quiz competition. The competition is on the theme of finding solutions for nonviolence.

Milan, a member of the winning team from the district of Kanyakumari emphasizes the important role of peer education: “Youth can talk about the problems associated with violence and spread the message of nonviolence amongst their family and friends.” This message is reinforced by his team-mate, Ajakshaya, who suggests: “As youth we should try and be helpful towards others and help them become nonviolent by talking to them patiently and listening to their problems.”

In addition to the youth quiz, the one day event includes an art competition from primary age school students and motivational talks by the Ministry of Education and Indian Red Cross Tamil Nadu branch leadership.

Seventy-nine schools in the six districts represented by the students have been implementing a youth led violence prevention program (called “Be Safe!”) in middle-schools and high schools as part of integrated disaster risk reduction and health initiatives. The “Be Safe!” program covers practical actions youth can take to prevent and respond to physical and psychological violence, ensure girls and boys are treated equally without discrimination, and work with adults to find local solutions to violence.

As part of the program, schools not only deliver education but also ensure teachers are trained on violence prevention, school codes of conduct for the safety of youth and teachers are in place, and child protection committees are established with participation from girls and boys, parents, teachers and local leaders like police and health providers. In the past three years the program has reached over 30,000 youth per year.

“ We participated in the Violence Prevention programme to become leaders. And we will become leaders by helping others. Violence is harmful for society because it hurts others, that is why it is important to practice nonviolence ”

– Youth peer educator.



Winners of India Red Cross youth violence prevention quiz competition

Ajakshaya, Milan and team-mate Jerin summarize their motivation to stop violence as: “Nonviolence will help the country become very peaceful. There will be less conflict and wars around us, which will make everybody happy and healthy.”

VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE

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