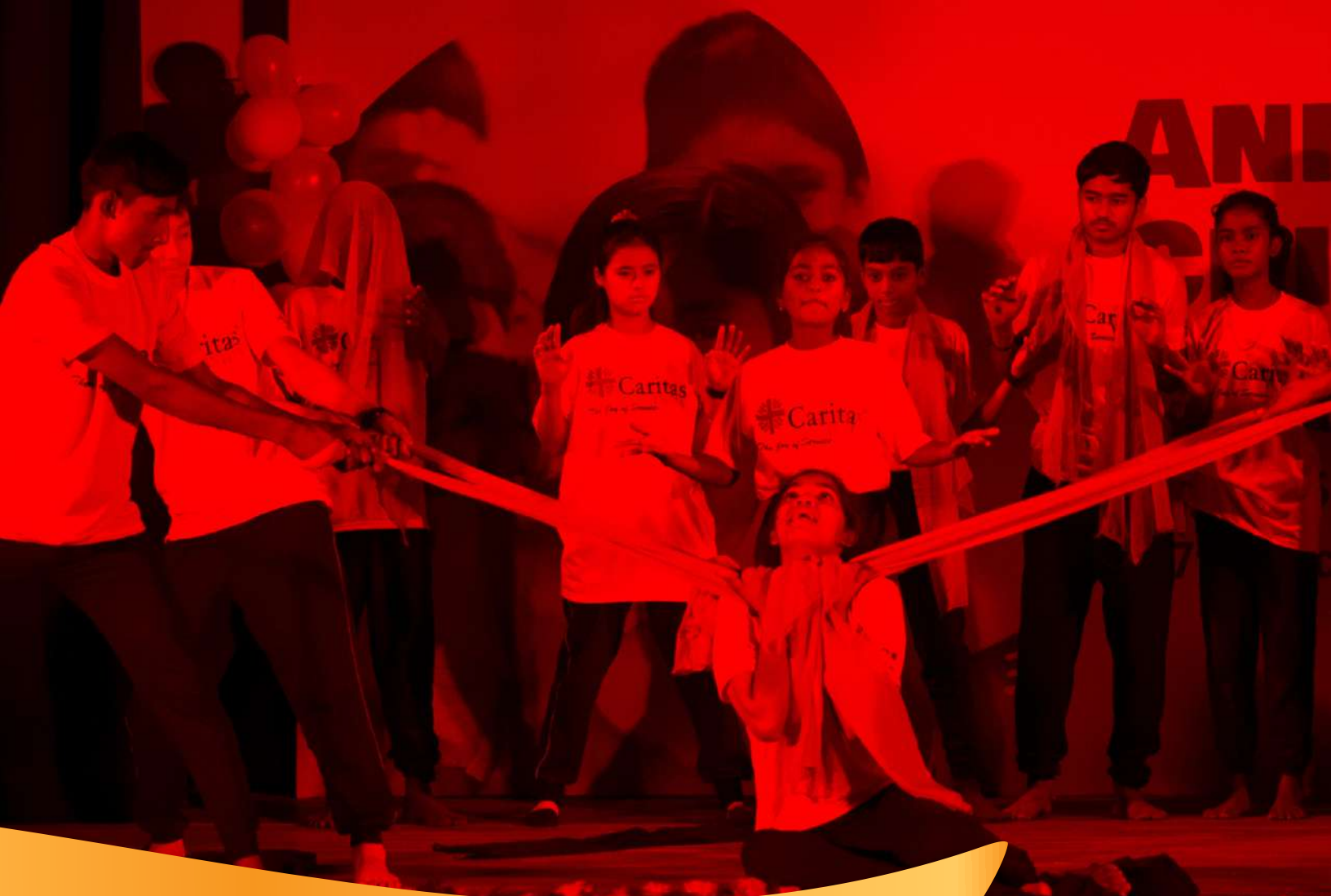


# State Annual CHILD LEADERS' Conclave

Germany



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



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INDIA  
*The Joy of Service...*

*State Annual*  
**CHILD LEADERS'**  
*Conclave*

**Process Documentation State-level Annual Child Leaders Conclave  
Using Theatre In Education (TiE)**

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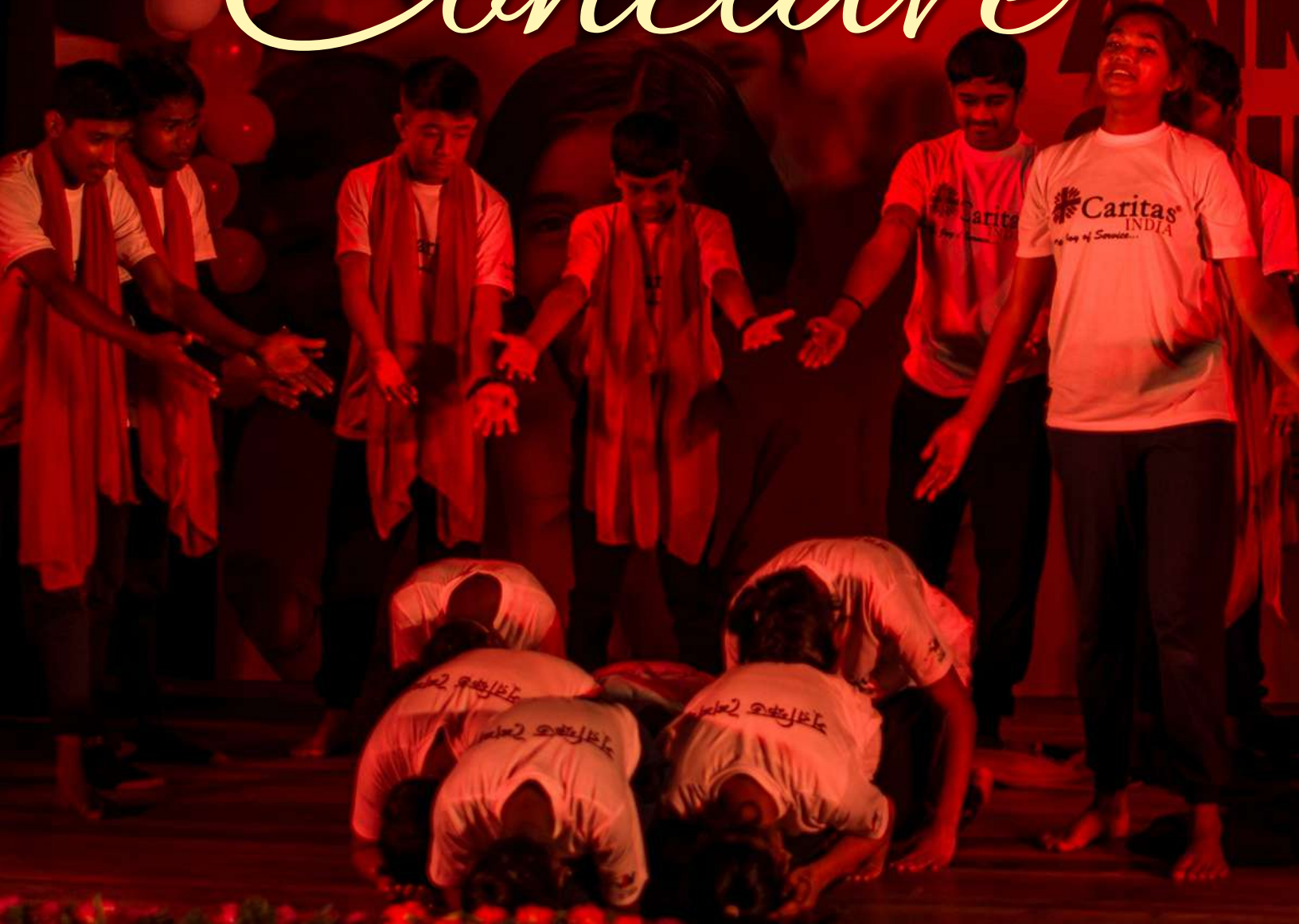
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# State Annual CHILD LEADERS' Conclave





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# FOREWORD



This report is a process document of one of the key child participation approaches Caritas India has taken which reflects processes that link adults' specialist analysis of issues with children's own analysis and experiences through the medium of theatre.

Theatre in education (TiE) is one of the most important tools for empowering children. Significantly, with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, a rights-based approach has acquired prominence in the child rights discourse. When children are provided with the opportunity, necessary information, and support, children can and do make a significant contribution to decisions affecting their lives. TiE acts as a tool to facilitate children's unheard voices through the medium of theatre. The medium informs key duty bearers like government authorities, media, and civil society actors to listen directly from children and make informed decision making. Caritas India hired the service of Mr. Walter Peter an Artist Educator, Theatre Practitioner India Book Record Holder, TEDx speaker, and Ex TiE Company Members of the National School of drama to train children's leaders, on the TiE TOT.

Caritas India is running a child rights program across the 6 districts in the Indian state of West Bengal, namely Darjeeling (Siliguri), Kalimpong, Alipurduar, Murshidabad, (U) Dinajpur, and 24 Parganas (North), comprising 25 Revenue blocks, 41 Gram Panchayats, and 164 villages.

Caritas India has used TiE (Theatre in Education) as a tool for engaging with children for child-led advocacy through children collectives. The children with the medium of theatre are presenting grass-roots issues in front of the stakeholders, especially duty bearers. Many children who have gone through a TiE training workshop first at the community level and then in Kolkata have been happy simply and are making new plays together, through collective improvisation now in villages.

Through this, children showcase and make vocal their issues affecting them and thus leading to better protection. Encouraging them to articulate their concerns and demands for safe and accessible mechanisms for challenging violence and abuse.

We as adults commonly underestimate children's abilities but are positively amazed when faced with their active participation and contributions.

Caritas believes and upholds the fact that children are the best agents in bringing about social transformation. There is no better way to make their issues highlighted and influence stakeholders, especially the duty bearers.

**Fr. (Dr.) Paul Moonjely**  
**Executive Director**  
**Caritas India**

# MESSAGE



The TiE (Theatre in Education) process document is our creative support for the most marginalized children. This support to our child leaders has resulted in bringing voices from the grass-root in front of duty bearers. The TiE is a medium through which children can effectively communicate their fears, hopes, and desires. The Theatre workshop at the partner level and the final presentation in Kolkata were filled with creativity but underneath all the celebration and the creativity, the final presentation being performed asked some very hard questions about the rampant negligence of child rights in society.

The theatre in education provides a platform for the underprivileged children to engage, get involved, and more importantly, build an understanding of the issues faced by them and their peers on a day-to-day basis. The objective of this Theatre in education workshop was to strengthen the voices of children in realizing their dream of getting rights and equal opportunities through child participation. It creates an environment in which children gain confidence to get rid of their inhibitions and leads them to share the joys and challenges they face while accessing simple things in life.

In the final presentation 30 child leaders from Caritas project areas, came together to attend a four-day-long children's workshop with Mr. Walter Peter (Ex Member, TIE, National School of Drama) which culminated in sharing their experiences of school, society their expectations, triumphs from the habitation they belong. The final presentation in front of duty bearers asked many important questions and forced them to go with the resolution to do something for child rights.

We at Caritas India will continue to bring such creative pursuits to our children. So that the children's voices are strengthened in front of duty bearers.

**Fr. (Dr.) Jolly Puthenpura**  
**Asst. Executive Director**  
**Caritas India**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Children's engagement is critical to the success of any initiative we undertake since they are seen as change agents thus Caritas India extends its sincere gratitude to our budding child leaders, their parents who keenly and willingly collaborated in this Theatre in Education Workshop.

Our sincere appreciation to our stakeholders Child Protection Committee members, government officials from Department of Labour, West Bengal, Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Juvenile Justice Board Members and Child Welfare Committee members, NGOs, INGOs, academicians, media, eminent dignitaries, and guests for their participation in the Annual State Children's Conclave

Theatre in Education (TiE) Laa Po Laa workshop was designed by Mr. Walter Peter – Director and Founder Laa Po Laa TiE, India as a lead facilitator. He is an ex-faculty of the National School of drama<sup>1</sup> and uses theatre in education for making child participation a reality. We are thankful to him for working with us and our children's collective members.

We at Caritas India are thankful to our partners for making the Annual State Children's Conclave a success. We also like to thank Fr. Paul Moonjely Executive Director of Caritas India and Fr. Jolly Puthenpura Assistant Executive Director, Caritas India for believing in this concept of child participation and being always open to bringing in new innovations in the project area.

**“Finally, we would like to convey our heartfelt Gratitude to Caritas Germany, whose support has immensely helped us in our endeavor towards realizing Child rights in West Bengal”**

<sup>1</sup>Theatre In Education Company (Sanskar Rang Toli) of National School of Drama was established on October 16, 1989, and is one of the important educational resource centers in the country. TIE Company consists of a group of actor-teachers working with and performing for children. The major focus of TIE Company is to perform creative, curriculum-based, and participatory plays in schools specially designed and prepared for children of different age groups. The major thrust of the plays is to create an atmosphere to encourage children, to raise questions, make decisions and choices with an awareness of themselves within the larger society.





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# INTRODUCTION

Caritas India, since its inception in 1962 strives to create a protective and empowering environment for children from marginalized communities, in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Odisha, and Assam focusing on local issues of disaster risk reduction, education, malnutrition, child marriage, peacebuilding, trafficking and child labor.

Caritas India presently is running ' SUROKHIT SHAISHAV ' Promoting Safe Childhood in West Bengal – A child rights program across the 6 districts in the Indian state of West Bengal, namely Darjeeling (Siliguri), Kalimpong, Alipurduar, Murshidabad, (U) Dinajpur, and 24 Parganas (North), comprising 25 Revenue blocks, 41 Gram Panchayats, and 164 villages with an aim to work towards the abolition of child labor in all forms in the state by establishing effective child protection systems and promoting children's rights to education, inclusive development, and social participation. The project is covering 45047 Households that will cover the total population of 213,019 (Males- 108881 & Females – 104138); with 76672 total child population, 28336 aged below 6 years, and 48336 aged 7-18 years.

The project has undertaken the below approaches to improve child participation in the project area:

**FORMATION OF CHILDREN GROUPS:** Children groups have been formed at the community level as a primary institution for working towards building the culture of child participation in the community. These children groups give children a platform to learn and express themselves. It helps them to emerge as champions for becoming agents of change, primarily at the community level.

**INVOLVEMENT OF CHILD LEADERS:** Child leaders in children's groups are selected based on the child's merit and capability, irrespective of their social group. From the inception of any programme, child leaders are given an orientation along with other children on the project's goal, objectives, school sessions, events, and campaigns on a regular basis.

The project regularly works with children and children from the locality are treated as co-traveler in the project implementation. On a regular basis, the Project Team together with children collectives identifies the Risk and Vulnerability on which the future course of action of a program at the community level is planned. The project regularly builds the capacity of child leaders through various planned activities like Leadership training, Debate discussions, and co-curricular activities.

As a part of the process to further build the capacity of children groups TIE (Theatre in Education) workshop with child leaders was organized. This workshop will help children to express themselves in the group by using theatre as a medium. The children who learned this form of child participation are taking this with other children in their locality. This entire process is having the potential to become organic and as observed till now is equally popular among children and their duty bearers.



# THEATRE & CHILD PARTICIPATION

Children are having a different approach to participation. This is especially difficult for children who are survivors. To revisit the trauma through an interpersonal approach is very difficult. Sometimes it is difficult for children to come forward and speak for themselves like adults. Also, Children who are silenced and passive can be abused by adults with relative impunity. Supporting them with information, encouraging them to articulate their concerns, and introducing safe and accessible mechanisms for challenging violence and abuse are key strategies for providing effective protection. Theatre is one such medium which is having the potential to overcome these barriers.

Theatre in Education (TiE) movement was first pioneered by the Belgrade in 1965, as a way to use theatre and drama to create a range of learning opportunities for young people. The delivered a free TiE service to schools across Coventry between 1965 and 1996<sup>2</sup>.

The Theatre in Education movement soon spread to theatres across the UK. Then to broader settings across the globe. Inspiring a wide range of interactive theatre with children and young people. Encouraging and empowering them to investigate challenging situations for themselves<sup>3</sup>.

INSPIRATIONAL

CHALLENGES  
PERCEPTIONS

Theatre in  
Education  
TiE

DELIVERS  
IMPORTANT  
MESSAGES

LEARNING  
CUM  
FUN

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wearegibber.com/blog/what-is-theatre-in-education/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ntccorporate.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ECU\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_theatre\\_in\\_education\\_a\\_review\\_of\\_the\\_evidence.pdf](http://www.ntccorporate.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ECU_the_use_of_theatre_in_education_a_review_of_the_evidence.pdf)

## Theatre in Education (TiE)<sup>4</sup>

Assist children in learning that excites them, thus making them more aware of their concerns and present key/ strong message before duty bearers and compel them to reflect on their behaviour and take action.

TiE creates change in perception attitudes and behaviour. Improves Self esteem by using drama as a learning tool.

Aids children in delivering important message that is easily understood and remembered. Children's inquiry skills are developed and they start questioning what influences them which impacts their behaviour and attitudes towards life.

Combines learning with fun making it an enjoyable experience for Child Leaders/ Child Collectives , thus fostering healthy participation.



### FIRST

Children engaged in economic activity may be able to protect themselves better against exploitation and abuse through the TiE workshop.



### SECOND

Children, when provided with the opportunity, necessary information, and support, can and do make a significant contribution to decisions affecting their lives.



### THIRD

Adults commonly under-estimate children's capacities and are positively impressed when faced with children's active contributions .

<sup>4</sup>LaapOLaa: <http://laapolaatie-india.com/>



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# METHODOLOGY

On 17th December 2021, Caritas India organized its Annual State level Children Conclave 2021, for its child leaders from 6 districts of West Bengal – Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Alipurduar, Uttar Dinajpur, Murshidabad and 24 Parganas (North). Over 86 participants and 35 child leaders participated in this mega event at Kolkata.

This Conclave gave an opportunity to children to showcase and make vocal their issues affecting them and encourage them to articulate their concerns and demands for safe and accessible mechanisms for better protection from violence and abuse.

Caritas India is grateful to Mr. Walter Peter for introducing TiE (Theatre in Education) for engaging with children for child-led advocacy through children collectives. The journey began on 1st December 21, with the first child leader workshop at Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre, Kolkata, Suprava Panchashila Mahila Uddyog Samiti, Krishnagar Cathedral Charitable Social Society, Social Welfare Institute Raigunj, Seva Kendra Siliguri, Bal Surakshya Abhiyan and completing the final at Anugyalaya Darjeeling Diocesan Social Service Society on 10th December 2021.



# PHASE 1: (TIE WORKSHOP)

In phase-1 from 1st December 2021-11th December 2021 (At the partner Level) Walter Peter visited all the 7 partners working across the 6 districts. The idea was to do a preliminary workshop for a day and to identify children for the mega event in Kolkata for a period of 4 days. Also, in phase-1 of the workshop, local issues were identified to make a collective pitch in front of the duty bearers. In phase-1 approx. 500 children were touched upon across locations and an introduction was made to theatre.



# PHASE 2: (TIE WORKSHOP)



**Phase 2: 13th December 2021- 17th December 2021**

35 Child Leaders performed in front of different stakeholders – government, INGOs, NGOs Academicians, media, and individuals' welcome song and three plays. Three plays were prepared based on the issues identified in phase-1 and phase-2.

## **THEME 1:**

Every child to be in school's **Kaam Nehi Kitaab Chahiye** 'I want books not Work ...' showcasing the plight of child labor on one hand as well as their dreams and aspirations. The play showcased the need for and importance of schooling for children. It promoted the health and well-being of children, including academic and personal growth, critical thinking and analytical skills, and the motivation to stay in school and excel. Schooling is still an unrealized dream for many, and the benefits associated with it are still unmet. The first play was a depiction of challenges faced by children and their desire to attend schools, to get educated so that they grow up as responsible individuals.

## **THEME 2:**

'Mujhe Toh abhi khelna tha; par...' 'I wanted to play now ...but, children presented their desire to play and enjoy their childhood, but are chained in the bond of early/child marriage and abuse by adults. Girl child education is very much clear that the girl child is discriminated against from the earliest stage of life, through her childhood and into her adulthood. The play drew the attention of the audience towards this discrimination and highlighted the need of education of girl children. It focused on the dreams and aspirations of girl children to get educated and how society can give flight to their dreams.

## **THEME 3:**

Finale being 'Koi Mauka nehi hun mai... Jimmedari Hun teri...' 'I am your responsibility, Don't treat me as an object, highlighting the issue of child abuse – physical and emotional abuse. Children's dream for education participation is a process where children can freely express and also have an influence on a decision that brings about a change in their lives. It is a combination of different approaches where their voices are heard to address the issues that affect them. The play focused on the importance of the voices of children as they are the future and thus it is extremely important for society to work together to ensure we save their childhood.



The following components were included during four days' workshop:-

**13th Dec 21: Day 1: Open House:** Interaction with child leaders on burning issues related to children.

- o Three main issues were selected by children , namely:-
  - Child Marriage & Missing Children
  - Child Labour
  - Child Abuse



**14th and 15th Dec 21: Day 2, Day 3:** Through interactive discussion with child leaders - Thought, Theme, and Ideas were developed along with its character and language with facilitation from Mr. Walter Peter – Lead Facilitator. Dance was also incorporated within the drama.

- o Music and Song were simultaneously composed by external musicians
- o Preparation: Stage step up, costumes, and special effects. Song's rehearsals



**16th Dec 21: Day 4:** Rehearsal on stage at Rotary Sadan , Kolkata with full costume and special effects.

## Designing of Theatre by and with children



### SESSIONS

- o In a circle—breathing exercise (Breathing in and breathing out ) was done to relax the mind and body with eyes closed. – 3 – 5 mins
- o Humming sound – was done to clear the vocal cords and also to smoothen it. – 5 -8 mins
- o Flexing of the ankle by rotating it clockwise and anti-clockwise – 5 – 10 mins
- o Light jogging and loosening of hands and legs (doing it at the same place)
- o Ending by Prayer / Prayer song

### ARRANGEMENT IN THE HALL

- o A tumbler of warm water (as it was winter)
- o Bottles of Glucose Water – to avoid dehydration
- o Floor mat / Durries for sitting
- o Dustbins
- o First Aid box – assigned to one Team Leader ( Adult)
- o Sound System – stand and a cordless mike

## Sessions: Creation, composition, and practice of Drama /Song/Dance -Themes



From day one the themes/issues to be presented before the audience was finalized with the consent of children and program team members. Visit partner location aided in getting the pulse of the issues concerning child Labour.

Lead facilitator Mr. Walter Peter once again reinforced the power of 'LaaPoLaa' that is among all to reignite it. The first play on Child Labour was developed.

### Each day pointers were placed before children (Day 1, Day 2, Day 3 and Day 4)

1. What do they understand by child labour?
2. What are the different types of labour, in which children are involved?
3. Which all among them will you take and show to the audience to bring about change/transformation?
4. Developing plot/scene
5. Selection of actors
6. Developing small script – in Hindi, and Bengali
7. Background music also is now incorporated along with the composition of a song by TiE Musicians
8. Learning the song and dance movement
9. Doing with props – Red and Green dupatta and Placards

# FINAL PRESENTATION

The Conclave started with the Welcome song cum dance by children -Iss Jahan ke liye...



The Conclave set the example of a child-centric – with and by children program wherein the entire show was directed by them. They were the scriptwriters, lead and supporting actors, and singers.



Mr. Nikhil Kumar, Thematic Lead Child Development Caritas India in his keynote address share about Caritas India's Pan India presence since 1962, empowering and creating a protective space for children from marginalized communities in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Odisha, Assam. "Our child rights program, Surokhit Shaishav , aims at abolishing child labour in all forms by establishing effective child protection systems and promoting children's right to education, inclusive development, and increased social participation in 6 districts of West Bengal. Today Caritas India along with Theatre in Education (TIE) India has given our child leaders and opportunity to build their self-esteem and confidence to express their issues and concerns especially on child labour. This unique conclave has provided space for children voices to be heard by relevant authorities for taking immediate steps ..."

With these opening notes, dignitaries were called and felicitated with Uttoria by child leaders to Mrs. Bulbul Soren, Assistant Secretary, West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights ( WBCPCR), Mr. Prabhat Kumar , Social Policy Specialist – UNICEF, Mrs. Soma Bhowmick Child Welfare Committee Chairperson – Murshidabad, Mrs. Jaya Majumdar – Juvenile Justice Board – Ex Member Howrah District and Mr Pallav Karmakar, Senior Manager Advocacy- International Justice Mission, Kolkata.



As this was the first of a kind for child leaders of West Bengal two-child leaders shared their experience journey with LaaPoLaa. Soon after the felicitation, children performed the welcome dance titled “Is Jahan je ke liye.



This was followed by experiential sharing my Master Dibyendu Mondal - “I am from a very remote village in Murshidabad district, I am a member of a children club. Today I feel happy to share my feeling with all present here. This workshop has helped me gain self-confidence and express my feeling and concerns about child labor.



For Caritas India, Theatre in Education was a new tool, a tool for transformation in education for children. Mr Walter Peter, Director and Founder Theatre in Education shared his journey, 'LaaPoLaa is the 'Tool'.

We used participation is used as a tool in drama.

Children will lead the campaign of Child rights in their groups and change will happen and come from children. We are for children and with children, but here children are the creators and makers of their own world.” The uniqueness of this process is that there is no script. Children themselves have prepared their script and its remarkable! . I thank Caritas for this opportunity to facilitate and share my tool with 35 child leaders from West Bengal'.

Later in the next play children presented the plight of child labor titled “ Kam nahi Kitab Chahiya... the play depicted physical and mental exploitation and abuse perpetrated to children. It powerfully showcased a girl child's struggle for education.



Soon it was followed by a testimonial from Ms. Puja Murmu

“I am thankful to Caritas India for organizing this event for us.” expressed by Miss Puja Murmu, Child leader, Pragati Children Club Siliguri. I am very happy to be here, thankful to Caritas India and LaaPoLaa team for giving me this opportunity to learn.

Earlier I was terrified to come forward and speak in front on people, but theatre in education workshop has taught me to be confident and today I am here speaking to all and sharing my experience.”





Second play yet another representation stopping child marriage and girl child education - 'Mujhe Toh abhi khelna tha; par...' I wanted to play now ...but, children presented their desire to play and enjoy their childhood, but are chained in the bond of early/child marriage and abuse by adults. They questioned I am a child, I too have the right to live and right to education.

00199



This was followed by speech from Mr Prabhat Kumar – UNICEF Social Policy Specialist 'What I saw here today was sheer MAGIC! , it was so inspirational ! were opening words from Mr. Prabhat Kumar Social Policy Specialist – UNICEF.

'Children have the right to participation. Participation is the pathway for children, not only to express their issues concerning them but also to actively participate in all processes and dialogue.

This experience needs to be amplified with other children across 23 districts in WB "He thanked children leaders for their hard work and an exemplary musical team of TIE India.

This was followed by day's final theatrical extravaganza where children enacted on child abuse titled " Kio mauka nahi hum mai ... jemmedari hun mia teri... reflected the issue of child abuse -physical mental and emotional.

The performance powerfully pointed out that the safety of children especially girl's child is everyone's responsibility. The culmination was with a song thanking Caritas India.



Finally, Mrs. Bulbul Soren, Assistant Secretary West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights addressed the need for awareness on child labour and child marriage at family and community level. ' A family aware on child issues will lead children into right direction.

She encourages children to take this opportunity to share this learnings with their friends. Learn, enjoy, and share this knowledge with all our friends.

35 child leaders received certificate of participation from Mrs Bulbul Soren,- Assistant Secretary WBCPCR, Mr Prabhat Kumar – UNICEF Mrs Jaya Majumdar Ex Member- JJ Board Howrah Dist. and Mrs Soma Bhowmik Chairperson CWC- Murshidabad & Director SPMUS.



The National Conclave ended by all guests present taking a pledge against Child Labour saying No to Child Labour





# Way Forward

**“Sometimes the plays speak what everybody knows; sometimes they speak what nobody says. Sometimes they open paths or unveil truths; sometimes they challenge the way things are done or understood”**

Leonard and Kilkelly



Caritas India believes that anything for children cannot be without Children. Hence, it envisions Children at the Central of the ecosystem and other primary, secondary, and tertiary influencers on the child as part of the ecosystem. Caritas India and Partners together we commit to building a caring and sharing community with children and For Children.

In the coming months and years, Child Leaders across 6 districts of West Bengal will positively influence mindsets of key stakeholders who interact with child laborers closely viz. families, community/samaj, law enforcement agencies through this methodology. This in turn will strengthen convergence between children, community, and service providers – at the Micro-level with Panchayats Block and District Officials and at the macro level with State-level commissions and elected representatives.



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# Glimpses







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