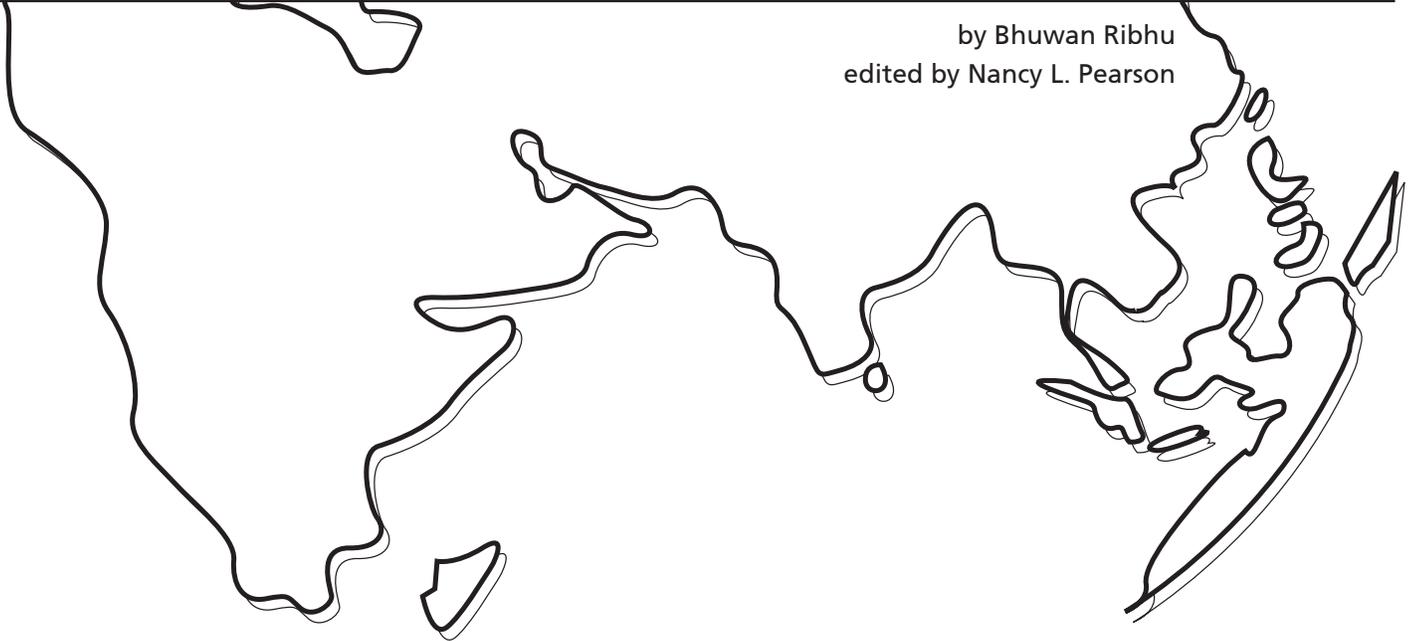


**Building Child Friendly Villages:**  
Using village strengths to combat child labour and other exploitative practices

by Bhuwan Ribhu  
edited by Nancy L. Pearson



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**Notebook Series Editor**

Nancy L. Pearson

**Design and copyediting**

Susan Everson

**Layout**

Kristin Vann Sands assisted by Jennifer Kaye

**Copyediting**

C.C. Strom

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4 Biography

5 Letter from the Project Director

6 Introduction

7 Background

9 Development of the Tactic

11 Steps to Implement the Tactic

13 8 Steps to Make a Village a Child-Friendly Village

16 Malutana-Toward Self-Reliant Attitude

18 Implementation Plan, Timeline and Impact of Tactic

20 Challenges Faced and Lessons Learned

22 Transferability of the Tactic and Conclusion



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## Description of Organization

Founded by Kailash Satyarthi in 1980, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) symbolizes the struggle against child labour and child servitude. BBA started its work in the stone quarries of north India against child labour, bondage and slavery, when child labour was a non-issue. No political, legal or civil society initiative existed against it. The common perception was that children were working due to poverty and people saw nothing unusual about it; rather, they were considering it as a necessary evil for economic development.

BBA has rescued over 76,600 child and bonded labourers till 2007. BBA believes that the fight against child labour must occur on every level – local, state, national and international. BBA has rescued over 76,600 child and bonded labourers till 2007. BBA is known for its innovative approaches and multi-faceted interventions towards elimination of child labour including secret raids and rescue operations to liberate slave children, making them internally strong, self-reliant and responsive to social needs through its unique model rehabilitation centres.

BBA has also been spearheading campaigns for free, compulsory and meaningful education, sensitisation of parents, communities and school children, coalition building with Trade Unions, Teachers' Organisations, Religious Groups, Political Parties and Employers, consumer action like Rugmark Foundation, Ethical Trade Initiative like Fair Play Campaign and several others.

## Contact Information

*Bachpan Bachao Andolan*

(Save the Childhood Movement)

*Telephone no:* +91 11 2622 4899, 2647 5481

*Fax number:* +91 11 2623 6818

*Web address:* [www.scf.org.in](http://www.scf.org.in), [www.bba.org.in](http://www.bba.org.in)

*E-mail address:* [scfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:scfoundation@gmail.com)

## Biography: Bhuwan Ribhu

Bhuwan Ribhu is an activist of the Save the Childhood Foundation which was started under the banner of Bachpan Bachao Andolan. A lawyer by training, he has been a human rights activist from a very young age, participating in protests, demonstrations and foot marches. He has led the rescue of over 2,000 trafficked child bonded labourers. In 2007, he ideated and led the largest advocacy campaign of its kind in the world against child trafficking for forced labour in the form of the South Asian March Against Child Trafficking across the largest source areas of trafficking in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh border areas. The march, which was more than 5200 kilometers long, was joined by over 500 civil society organisations and 1 million people.

His work has created a mass awareness on the issue of trafficking and forced labour throughout the chain of demand and supply. In November 2007, he led the rescue of over 100 children who had been working in conditions of slavery in embroidery units for major international retail brands, including Gap. This incident exposed the use of child labour in high street fashion and resulted in a public outcry across the world.

As a result of various petitions he filed, and the subsequent court orders, more than 10 million rupees have been given by the government of India to the released bonded child labourers as compensation and rehabilitation.

In 2002, he and his team initiated the first-of-its-kind research and in-depth study about the magnitude of trafficking of girls and boys in the Indian Circus Industry. As a result of their constant negotiation and pressure, the Indian Circus Federation met with human rights organisations which resulted in a highly successful and acclaimed declaration by the Circus Federation to gradually phase out the children working in Circuses and to stop further recruitment of children. This was the first step towards incorporation of Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical Trade practices in the entertainment industry.

Bhuwan Ribhu and his team are also responsible for bringing the issue of trafficking in the entertainment industry to the top of the socio-political agenda. When a number of non-Federation circuses did not adhere to the declaration, massive raid and rescue operations were conducted resulting in huge awareness in India and Nepal against circuses. Based on a petition filed by him, the government of India has been issued a notice on the subject by the Supreme Court of India. Moreover, there has been an amendment under the Child Labour law in India banning the use of children as domestic labour, in the hospitality sector and in the entertainment industry. He has gotten a number of pathbreaking decisions in favour of child rights from various administrative and judicial agencies including formation of the Delhi State Child Rights' Commission, an action plan to rescue and rehabilitate all child labour in Delhi, etc. He is based in Delhi and leads the movement against trafficking for forced labour.



Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Tactics in Human Rights Tactical Notebook Series! In each notebook a human rights practitioner describes an innovative tactic that was used successfully in advancing human rights. The authors are part of the broad and diverse human rights movement including non-government and government perspectives, educators, law enforcement personnel, truth and reconciliation processes, women's rights and mental health advocates. They have both adapted and pioneered tactics that have contributed to human rights in their home countries. In addition, they have utilized tactics that when adapted can be applied in other countries and other situations to address a variety of issues.

Each notebook contains detailed information on how the author and his or her organization achieved what they did. We want to inspire other human rights practitioners to think tactically – and to broaden the realm of tactics considered to effectively advance human rights.

This notebook will discuss how Save the Childhood Foundation, which was started under the banner of Bachpan Bachao Andolan, developed the concept and application of child friendly villages as a way to not only promote education for all but also combat the cycle of child labour. Child labour is both a cause as well as a consequence of poverty, illiteracy and lack of human security. The aim of child friendly villages is to create and sustain a child friendly atmosphere within the community to ensure education and put an end to child labour.

The entire series of Tactical Notebooks is available online at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org). Additional notebooks are already available and others will continue to be added over time. On our web site you will also find other tools, including a searchable database of tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners and information about our workshops and symposium. To subscribe to the New Tactics newsletter, please send an e-mail to: [newtactics@cvt.org](mailto:newtactics@cvt.org)

The New Tactics in Human Rights Project is an international initiative led by a diverse group of organizations and practitioners from around the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) and grew out of our experiences as a creator of new tactics and as a treatment center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position—one of healing and reclaiming civic leadership.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy L. Pearson".

Nancy L. Pearson

New Tactics Project Manager



## Introduction

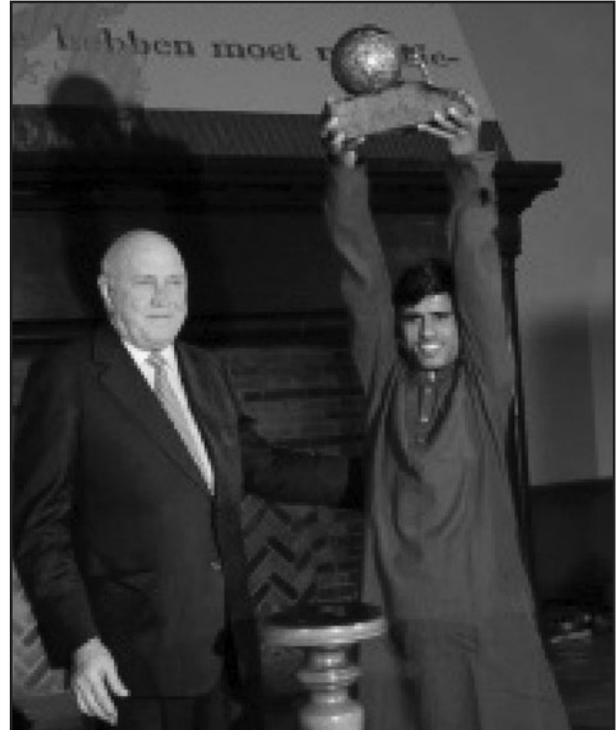
What difference can a Child Friendly Village make in the life of a child? Om Prakash Gurjar, a fourteen-year old who was rescued from forced labour, won the International Children's Peace Prize for leading a campaign against child labour and child slavery. On November 19, 2006, Om Prakash was awarded the International Children's Peace Prize in the Hague, Netherlands. Om was awarded the prize to commemorate his fight against child labour and for child rights in Rajasthan, India.

Om Prakash is 15 years old and was sold by his father to work in a tea stall for just 500 Rs. Belonging to a lower caste family of 10 members, Om Prakash Gurjar started working as an agricultural bonded labourer to pay the debt of his grandfather. Om Prakash's grandfather borrowed some money from a moneylender and worked throughout his life to repay it. The debt then passed on to Hariram Gurjar, Om Prakash's father and finally to Om Prakash at the tender age of five years. Ploughing, sowing, harvesting, tending to cattle, and handling pesticides and other chemicals was his daily routine. His hardships were compounded by the drought-prone arid land of Rajasthan and beatings from the master for slightest mistakes. Om Prakash was given two meals a days for his work; he never got any wages. The lack of any wages, in lieu of Om Prakash's hard labour, made his father send Om Prakash to work for a tea-stall owner who paid a meager 500 rupees (US \$12.63). This was a change of scene for young Om Prakash, yet no respite from the usual dawn-to-dusk labour and no wages. After three months of abuse, hard work and no wages, he again went back to the farm.

Om Prakash escaped this misery and got his freedom when his village was selected under the Bal Mitra Gram (Child Friendly Village) programme by Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA).

The BBA activists went from door to door to convince the parents to send their children to school. When the activist visited Om Prakash's house and got to know about his situation, the activist convinced his father to withdraw him from work and send him to school. The activist reminded his parents

“India lives in villages, said Mahatma Gandhi. This holds true even after 59 years of India's independence as 60% of the Indian population continues to live in villages.



Om Prakash Gurjar receiving the Children's Peace Prize from Frederik Willem de Klerk (former President of South Africa and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize together with Nelson Mandela)

about their responsibility to work and send their children to school. His parents were told that his education would be free and they would have to spend no money. Further Om Prakash would not be exploited in school and would also get a chance to enjoy his childhood.

Om Prakash blossomed and from the beginning it could be seen that he had the makings of a leader. A bright young boy, he started his formal schooling from Class 3 and since then many times has not only gotten the highest marks in his class but has also gotten the highest marks in his school. As a student, he noticed that although education was said to be “free” it was not so. The tuition fee was waived but students still had to bear the additional costs of school infrastructure, school development fund, etc. Om Prakash played an instrumental role in not only ensuring that primary education was “free” in all aspects for himself but also for all children in the state of Rajasthan.

A keen dramatist and singer, Om Prakash excelled in various cultural activities and campaigns organised by BBA. He participated in “Cricket For Peace” an India-Pakistan youth cricket tournament to break the wall of hatred, intolerance, violence and terrorism among the youth of India and Pakistan through cricket. When the strong-willed and competitive Om Prakash

realized that the Second Children's World Congress on Child Labour and Education was being organised in New Delhi, he bicycled for over 36 hours non-stop to cover the distance of 250 km from Virat Nagar to New Delhi. He also visited Japan in November 2005 to participate in a peace meeting organised by the "Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace" on the eve of the 60th year of Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear tragedy.

Om Prakash is studying in 10th standard. He has mobilized more than 500 birth registrations and is fervently working to make numerous other Bal Mitra Grams. He dreams of becoming the District Collector (the highest ranking official in a District), releasing all children from the bonds of slavery and in making a Child Friendly World. He says "I will work to support Child Labourers families, so that all children can go to school and enjoy their childhood."

This notebook will introduce and share the concept of Child Friendly Villages or Bal Mitra Gram (BMG) which directly address the multi-dimensional problems that generate, maintain and perpetuate the child labour situation. BMGs attack the triangular paradigm, a vicious circle of illiteracy, poverty and child labour. The BMG is an innovative concept that offers a long-term, sustainable solution to a wide variety of problems such as child labour, trafficking for forced labour, poverty alleviation, and illiteracy, among others. BMGs aim at prevention while understanding the root causes to ensure sustainability and permanent settlement of the child labour problem. Not only does the BMG programme aim to withdraw children from work while enhancing the quality of education, it also aims at a holistic development of villages towards the creation of a child friendly society. Throughout the whole process emphasis is given on child participation, community mobilization, promotion of education, victim empowerment, gender equity and awareness of gender issues, while drawing upon the convergence of various poverty alleviation schemes and programmes, and ensuring long-term sustainability of the initiatives through the creation of sound community organisation and building a resource base.

A BMG village has no child labour. All children receive compulsory, good quality education, and the voice and opinion of the children are heard and taken into account. To date there are more than 150 Child Friendly Villages and currently BBA is working in an additional 43 villages to make them Bal Mitra Gram. This notebook will outline how the BMG approach is child-centric and ensures participation of children, making it a comprehensive programme.



Youth Group of BMG village Bamanwas Chaughan

## Background

The fight against the scourge of child labour needs little justification. Children are entrapped in a world with no freedom of mobility or choice, leading a vagrant and tunnelled existence away from the hub of society. Their lives are tiresome and narrow to the point of claustrophobic. Their lives are subject to constant change. Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) symbolises the movement against child labour and education for all. BBA has a legacy of 25 years of crusade, as an initiator of rescuing slave children from the remotest village in India on the one hand and as the organiser of the Global March Against Child Labour across 103 countries on the other. Founded as a group of a few individuals, BBA has emerged as an organisation of thousands of individual supporters under the banner of "Bachpan Bachao Andolan" as well as a network of over 764 Non-Governmental Organisations, Trade Unions, Human Rights organisations, etc. dedicated towards the total elimination of child labour.

Child labour is both a cause as well as a consequence of poverty, illiteracy and even a lack of human security. The most common forms of child labour include bonded labour, child trafficking, child prostitution and child domestic labour. The majority of these children are found working in the agriculture sector, carpet weaving, brick kilns, mining, glass factories and other formal and informal sectors.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in 2004 there were 218 million children, ages 5 to 17, engaged in child labour practices around the world<sup>1</sup>. This amounts to one child out of seven involved in labour of some kind. There are an increasing number of cases highlighting the worst

<sup>1</sup> ILO, Facts on Child Labour. Source downloaded March 2007: [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/download/2006\\_fs\\_childlabour\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/download/2006_fs_childlabour_en.pdf)



forms of child labour such as forced or bonded labour, drug trafficking, armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, and other extremely hazardous forms of work.

It is estimated that there are approximately 60 to 100 million child labourers working in India alone. Even the most conservative official figures put it at 12.66 million working children between the ages of five and fourteen years. UNESCO's EFA monitoring report of 2008 estimates that there are over 72 million out of school children in the primary school age group. Further, ILO Bureau of Statistics, Economically Active Population estimated that 535,102,000 would be economically active in 2010. Of them 8,454,000 would be children in the age group 10-14 years accounting for 7.5% of children in that age group.

Combating child labour requires programme interventions that are comprehensive with a holistic approach that not only targets children, but also their families and communities, the recruiters, traffickers and exploiters, government officials, and society at large. There are millions of out-of-school children who have the potential to join the soaring numbers of child labourers. Efforts need to be made to prevent the entry of the non-child labourer into the labour market which fuels illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. The triangular paradigm of child labour, illiteracy and poverty alleviation needs to be resolved and broken. The BBA has made efforts to better understand the issue and has launched concrete interventions in the form of Bal Mitra Grams (BMG), which ensure school enrolment and retention of all children who are not in school in order to reduce the vulnerability of at-risk children and communities.

BMG initiatives will not only help India eradicate child labour from the villages, we are confident they will also show long term-results like women's empowerment, gender parity, complete school enrolment, increased school retention, and community mobilization, among other benefits. For example, the Bal Mitra Gram Rupkawas in Rajasthan has made tremendous strides for girls' empowerment.

BMG initiatives lead to the holistic development of communities, particularly concerning disadvantaged children, by addressing almost all aspects of development of children as healthy citizens.

Also, the problem cannot be solved in isolation as long as there is a continuous supply and demand for children. To prevent such inflow, BBA recognized that efforts need to be directed at the roots of the society.

### *Rupkawas - Girls at the Forefront*

Bal Mitra Gram Rupkawas in Rajasthan has set the tone for girls' empowerment with all the elected positions in the Bal Panchayat going to girls. This is a big achievement in a state like Rajasthan where women have always been denied their rights. The accomplishment of the Bal Panchayat is visible as they were successful in:

- a) Building a separate toilet for girls thus reducing the drop-out rate of girls
- b) Construction of a concrete platform in the school to be used for playing
- c) Formation of Kishore Balika Mandal, a group of 20 girls, to discuss social issues like child marriage and dowries and raise these matters with adults
- d) Members of Kishore Balika Mandal deciding to take the responsibility to sustain the BMG in their village
- e) Starting the process to get the group registered formally with the Zilla Parishad (Note: Zilla Parishad is a statutory representative local body at the district level under the Panchayati Raj Institution)

"India lives in villages," said Mahatma Gandhi. This holds true even after 59 years of India's independence, as 60% of the Indian population continues to live in villages.

It is not a surprise that the roots of child labour as a social evil arise from the villages, which is why BBA believes the remedy has to be sought at the village community level.<sup>2</sup>

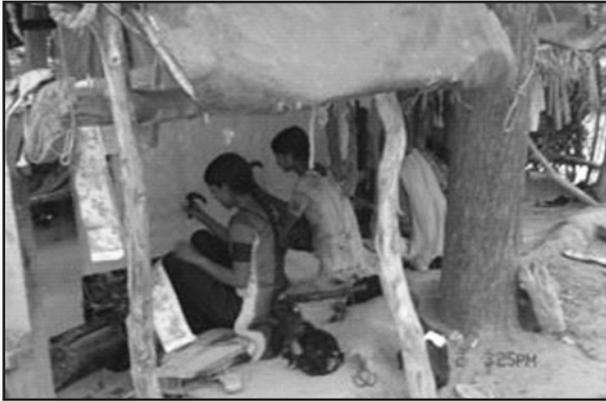
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2 EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005 Source: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=35313&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35313&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

Full report: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001373/137333e.pdf>

ILO document source: [http://www.ilo.org/iloroot/docstore/ipecc/prod/eng/2006\\_Global\\_CL\\_Trends\\_En.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/iloroot/docstore/ipecc/prod/eng/2006_Global_CL_Trends_En.pdf)

Other reference materials: Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labor (SIMPOC), International Labour Organization, 2002, source downloaded March 2007: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/others/globalest.pdf>



Working children engaged in Carpet Weaving in one of the two identified BMG villages before intervention

BMG is a village where there is no child labour, where all children receive compulsory, good quality education and the voice and opinion of children are heard and accepted by the adults as the children's panchayat (assembly) is given a recognition by the Gram Panchayat.<sup>3</sup>

It is BBA's intention that all children in villages need to be enrolled in mainstream education and follow-up activities should be aimed at ensuring that there is minimum dropout and maximum retention. The aim is to create and sustain a child friendly atmosphere within the community to ensure education and an end to child labour. Thus prevention lies at the heart of the BMG programme to combat child labour, which can only be eradicated by taking a holistic community-based approach. An investment in prevention is not only cost effective, as it reduces the vulnerability of children and their families, but also increases the opportunity for the future development of children, families, communities and the country as a whole.

### Development of the tactic

The mission statement is the beginning of the articulation of the dream/vision of the organisation. BBA's mission statement can be stated as such:

*To identify, liberate, rehabilitate and educate children in servitude through direct intervention, child and community participation, coalition building, consumer action, promoting ethical trade practices and mass mobilisation.*

<sup>3</sup> *Panchayat* literally means assembly (yat) of five (panch). Traditionally, these assemblies settled the disputes between individuals and villages. It is also the lowest rung in India administrative and judicial system.

<sup>4</sup> *Dharna* is a fast conducted at the door of an offender, especially a debtor, as a means of obtaining compliance with a demand for justice, such as payment of a debt.

The process of operationalising the mission begins with the articulation of the goals of the organisation. The goals taken together will only address part of the mission. At the centre of BBA's strategy for elimination of child labour lies the concept of Bal Mitra Gram which is designed to address the goal of "preventing and protecting children from child labour and exploitation and to minimize vulnerability and to build and strengthen the support systems in the community," so that the community assumes its own responsibility to send each child to school.

The concept of the Child Friendly Village, or Bal Mitra Gram, came into existence with BBA's mission to work for the eradication of child slavery and create a child friendly world. BBA adopted multi-pronged strategies that included such tactics as raid and rescue operations to liberate children in servitude, transit rehabilitation, consumer awareness, ethical trade, policy interventions, advocacy on child rights, mass-based actions (i.e. rallies, dharna<sup>4</sup>, demonstrations, political campaigns) which have yielded substantial results. Although these strategies and tactics generated a tremendous amount of awareness on child rights and child labour, the fact remained that the problem cannot be solved in isolation as long as children continue to become child labourers.

The idea of Bal Mitra Gram originated as a result of an experience of more than 20 years, as well as consultations with various people and groups working at the grassroots level. The idea was to make children aware of the exploitative nature of child labour, to emancipate them and make them self-reliant so as to eliminate the curse of child labour. For this to become reality, the active participation and cooperation of family, society, the village panchayat, and local administration is also essential.



Women's Group of a BMG village in a meeting



Children participating in an Essay Competition organized in BMG Paladi

The aim is to create and sustain a child friendly atmosphere within the community to ensure education and put an end to child labour. To ensure children's participation, involve children in the policy and decision making process of the Panchayati Raj<sup>5</sup> institution, Bal Panchayats were formed. A Bal Panchayat is an elected children's assembly to voice and put forward the children's opinion. This unique institution is given recognition by the adult (Gram) Panchayat. To help children gain confidence and provide them with an opportunity to articulate and voice their opinion, bal prashikshan programmes (Child Orientation Programme) are organised. This also helps the children to learn a great deal about the process of holding elections, debating and acting on local issues.

There are a number of essential elements at the heart of a Bal Mitra Gram or Child Friendly Village:

- Elimination and withdrawal of child labour from the village

The first step entails withdrawal of all children from work so that the basic objective of removing child labour from the particular village is ensured and every child goes to school.

- Enrolment of all children in schools

The next step involves ensuring that each and every child in the village goes to school so that the overall emphasis of ensuring the entry of every child into school is guaranteed.

- Establishing a children's parliament in every school in the village

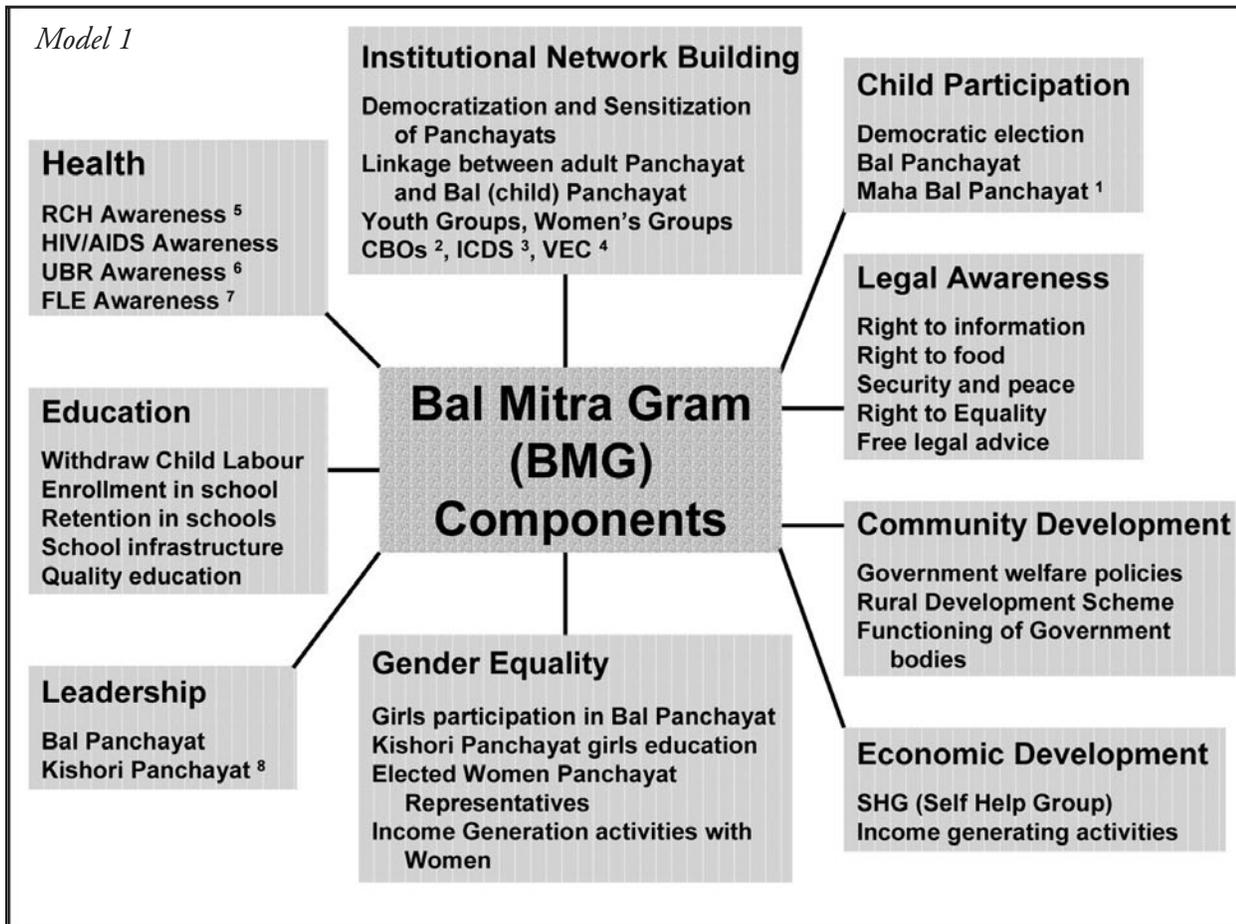
To enhance the component of democratic participation at the micro level it is envisaged that Bal Panchayat (children parliament) would be formed wherein issues related to children, their development and welfare would be taken up in a fully democratic manner. This will entail that the children themselves understand children-centric issues. It will be a prelude to the stage where the children will make their voices heard in the adult's Panchayat.

- Making their voices heard in Adult Panchayat

The opinion of children is heard and accepted by the adults as the children's panchayat (assembly) is given official recognition by the Gram Panchayat—the democratically elected village level statutory institution of local self-governance—so that the Bal Panchayat becomes a part and parcel in the decision-making processes and apparatus of the adult Panchayat.

Prevention—to combat the scourge of child labour—lies at the heart of the BMG programme. BMG aims at empowering community groups and organisations

<sup>5</sup> *Panchayati Raj* is a system of democratic institutions at the village, block and district level set up under state legislation. A panchayat refers to a council of elected members taking decisions on issues key to a village's social, cultural and economic life: thus a panchayat is also a village's body of elected representatives. The Panchayat in a village acts as a conduit between the local government and the people. Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, that forms the foundation of the Indian Political System.



and supports them in development initiatives and in organizing these groups to act as watch systems which monitor the problem. It also includes awareness-raising, youth leadership initiatives and skills training.

One of the most challenging areas of the program is to effectively work with children and adolescents. Through awareness-building efforts, BMG seeks to bring about a qualitative and quantitative change in the attitudes, skills and knowledge base of the target system—the child's community—in the hope that such change would trickle down to children who comprise its constituency. The organisation envisages a proactive role of the community towards the eradication of child labour and education for children, so the target system is seen as an agent of change in the long run.

### Steps to Implement the Tactic

The strategy for creating Child Friendly Villages in the rural areas entails a unique methodology that looks holistically at a community and children within the community. The BMG components have been depicted in the model. (Refer to Model 1.)

Creating a receptive friendly society for children in the villages is basically achieved through participatory social alliances between elected representatives of the village members, and local men, women and children for addressing the problems, needs, requirements and aspirations of children. An important aspect is obtaining quality and equitable education for boys and girls. This is a unique methodology for total elimination of child abuse through voluntary efforts at the village levels.

The working of the BMG at the village level has been depicted through Model II. (Note: The Anganwadi, literally the courtyard play centre, is a childcare centre, located within the village or the slum area itself. Anganwadi is the focal point for the delivery of services at the community level, to children below six years of age, pregnant and nursing mothers, and adolescent girls. Anganwadi centre also serves as the meeting place for women's groups, mothers' clubs, and mahila mandals (women's groups that promote awareness and joint action for child development and women's empowerment). An Anganwadi worker is trained in various aspects of health, nutrition and child development.

*Model 1: Abbreviations and Additional Information*

1 Bal Mahapanchayat: The Mahapanchayat is elected by the members of the respective Bal Panchayats. It is the standing committee which formulates the children's declaration and facilitates its communication and implementation. The Mahapanchayat members also represent the voices of children in discussions and actions on child labour and education at the village, district, state and national level. Thus the objectives of Maha Bal Panchayat are as follows:

- (1) To give a platform to the members of the respective Bal Panchayat to share their experiences, achievements, and challenges, as well as learn from one another.
- (2) To elect the national Bal Panchayat, called the Bal Mitra Mahapanchayat.
- (3) To circulate the children's declaration prepared by the children that will reflect their demands for holistic development of children.
- (4) To illustrate instances of child participation and strengthen it in all processes of decision-making, ensuring children's participation in policy-making decisions.
- (5) To create awareness on various legislations, schemes and tools of advocacy such as, Right to Information, welfare schemes of the Government.
- (6) To share and benefit from the resource and experience of village Panchayat and networking with committee members.
- (7) To create awareness on the effectiveness of the BMG model, thus encouraging others to adopt and replicate the model.

2 CBOs: Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) or Community Development Organisations, also known as Community Development Corporations (CDCs), share a basic mission: to improve the quality of life in their community. These nonprofits focus on one or more areas of heightened concern, such as the need for affordable housing, better schools, safer streets or more jobs. These are most often operated by local residents.

3 ICDS: The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme was conceived in 1975 by the government with an integrated delivery package of early childhood services so that their synergistic effect can be taken full advantage of. The Scheme aims to improve the nutritional and health status of vulnerable groups including children up to 6 years of age, pregnant women and nursing mothers through providing a package of services including supplementary nutrition, pre-school education, immunization, health check-ups, referral services and nutrition and health education. In addition, the Scheme envisages effective convergence of inter-sectoral services in the anganwadi centers.

4 VEC: Village Education Committee. Decentralized planning and management of elementary education is a goal set by the National Policy on Education, 1986. The Policy visualizes direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education. At the village level, a VEC has the main responsibility for community mobilization, school mapping, micro-planning, renovation and construction of school buildings and improvement of pedagogical curriculum.

5 RCH: The Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) interventions that are being implemented by the Government of India are expected to provide quality services and achieve multiple objectives. There has been a positive paradigm shift from the method-mix target-based activity to client-centred, demand-driven quality services. The Government of India is making efforts to re-orient the programme and change the attitude of the service providers at the grassroots level, as well as to strengthen the services at the outreach level.

6 UBR: Universal Birth Registration. Every child should be registered at birth. Article 7 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states that, "the child should be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name and the right to acquire a nationality". Not only is it the state's obligation to register the child incorporated in the CRC but it is also contained in other human rights conventions. Birth registration is a key event in a child's life. This is because of its importance in providing legal proof of the identity of the child. Unregistered children find it difficult to access their human rights. These include (a) the right to a name and nationality (b) the right to be free from all forms of exploitation (c) the right to protection in the juvenile justice system (d) the right to education and the right to health care.

7 FLE: The idea of Family Life Education (FLE) is relatively new to India but as part of a comprehensive mental health effort in India, it holds great promise as a keeper and restorer of the family unit.

8 Kishore Panchayat: The Kishori (Adolescent Girls) Panchayat (the incubation of future women leadership). The Kishori Panchayat as an intervention provides "the backward linkages"—backward in the sense of age-group, in the sense of deprived section, gender discrimination, income group—so that in the years to come, when these adolescent girls blossom into womanhood, they will be active and responsible women of the society.

## 8 Steps to Make a Village a Child Friendly Village

### 1) Identification of Bal Mitra Gram/Child Friendly Villages:

To identify the target villages three indicators are used.

#### a) Number of children engaged in economic activities

The number of children engaged in economic activities is the first consideration for a village to be chosen for carrying out the activities. As the main thrust of the BMG programme is to eradicate child labour of any form, villages with the highest number of child labourers are given topmost priority in initiating the process.

in selecting the villages for the BMG activities.

### 2) Liaising with Village Panchayat Head and Ward Members:

Panchayat leaders are influential opinion makers in the village. BBA communicates to these leaders the information about the causes and implications of child labour and the existing link between lack of education and the wide-spread exploitation of children as labourers. Constant liaising as well as awareness generation and IEC (Information, Education and Communication) tools create the best possible effect. Moreover, as BMG is essentially a community initiative ensuring a better future for all children of a village along the principles of justice, equity and peace, it is generally quite easy for the community to adopt the model. It is a simple model for people to accept, as regular meetings are



Bal Panchayat meeting at BMG Paladi

#### b) Number of non-school-going children

Making meaningful education accessible constitutes a major part of the project. In Indian villages girls are usually denied access to education. This is an endeavour to facilitate education, especially for girls.

#### c) Number of people from the marginalized section of the society

Because of the lack of education and information facilities, average Indian villagers are not aware of the changes that are taking place in the outside world. They do not even have the knowledge about various government schemes formulated for their own benefit. Most of such villages have a big number of under-privileged populations. Such villages are given priority

held in the village to gradually make villagers aware of the importance of education. The villagers themselves can also gauge the consequences which affect child labourers directly. Since child labour is also due to false promises, deception, misinformation or ignorance, helping vulnerable groups be aware of the traps that they may be lured into is an effective measure. Awareness-raising, school, family and community education, rallies and public meetings are consequently important tools which contribute to the working of the programme, as well as the acceptance of the model by the people. A good example of this can be seen through the "Tewari: Together in Change" example of villagers' accepting the model within three months of its introduction to the village.



### *Tewari: Together in Change*

In the patriarchal society of Rajasthan, in the famous Jaipur district, lies Virat Nagar Block in which there is a BMG Village, Tewari, where gender bias and strong patriarchal traditions are a way of life. Girls' lives are shaped by customs that are centuries-old and their future seems bleak. In such conditions, the BMG programme began in the village.

In three months time, the field activist was able to build rapport with the youth and women of the village through awareness-raising, while collecting data during the survey, and by holding regular meetings with them. The activist was able to make community members, such as youth, women and village leaders, realize that developmental education was necessary for both boys and girls and it was high time that they took things in their hands and became aware and active citizens. They decided to do something about the situation in the village.

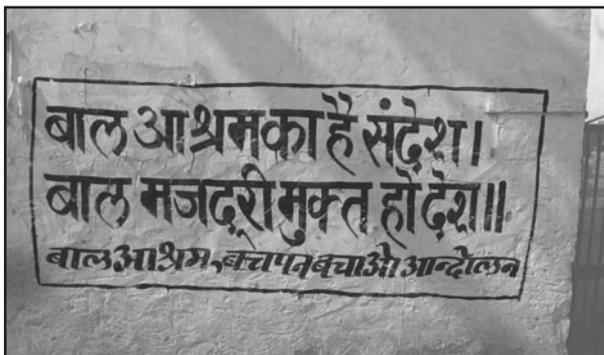
Taking up this challenge they decided to organise a public meeting at Tewari village with the help of the BMG activist. The meeting would address the cultural and traditional discrimination against the girls that lead to their abject conditions and motivate the parents to send their children, especially their girls, to school. They decided to call Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, a well-known Human Rights activist and chairperson of Global March Against Child Labour, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement). When they approached him he readily agreed and thus the public meeting in Tewari village took place on September 9, 2006 in which over 500 villagers were present—out of which around 300 were women and 200 children and the rest were men and a few village leaders.

In the meeting Mukti caravan (a mobile troupe of artists) performed, using the mediums of theater

and song to create awareness of child labour and the importance of education. They also raised various slogans and sang revolutionary songs. In addition to Mr. Satyarthi, the sarpanch, Mr. Vijay Shanker Saini, and other ward members (who are, respectively, the democratically elected head and members of a village level statutory institution of local self governance), as well as the residents of Tewari village and other nearby villages were present.

Addressing the public meeting Mr. Satyarthi said, "When people of the village get involved and think village problems are their own problems, there is nothing that they cannot achieve." He emphasized girl child education and said that girls should be given equal opportunities in all respects. He gave examples of women who have excelled in various walks of life. The sarpanch was so moved and impressed by the speech that he announced Rs.1000 in financial support of a girl belonging to a below poverty line family who was not attending school as the problem of poverty was compounded by the old age of her parents. Further, the wheels of change began with every villager pledging to send their children to school, especially girls. As a result of this the number of children from Tewari village prevented from work is the highest when compared to other BMGs.

In the meeting other issues were also discussed to improve the quality of school. For example the science teacher of government, Seth Prabhu Dayal Madhmik Vidyalaya, was not coming for the last two years and no action had been taken against her. Similarly, the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM), Mrs. Manisha Jat, had not been coming to the community for the last year and a half. Following the public meeting a resolution was passed by the Gram Panchayat and a complaint letter has been sent to the concerned authority to take action against the same.



Wall writing as a medium of generating awareness

#### a) Meeting with Village Panchayat (Assembly) Head:

The nature of the project demands an active participation on the part of the local community and the Panchayat leaders who are influential opinion makers in the villages.

After generating awareness about the ill-effects of child labour for the entire community, the concept of Bal Mitra Gram is taken to opinion leaders in order to generate public opinion in its favour. In order to facilitate diligent flow of information to the masses a BMG Information and Resource Centre is constituted in every village.

### *A Step towards Building Community Partnership*

The BBA activist, as a part of their activities, builds rapport with the village community which is maintained by constant liaisoning with the sarpanch (democratically elected head of a village level statutory institution of local government) of the Gram Panchayat of Dhoodhi Aamloda, a selected Child Friendly Village.

The sarpanch was made aware of the cause and implications of child labour, lack of education and the existing link between lack of education and the wide-spread exploitation of the children. After a few meetings and discussions consensus-building took place. He spoke about the situation in Sunderpura Village where according to him around 100 children were not going to school. He also stated that the situation in other villages of Amloda Panchayat was no better. The sarpanch informed the BBA activist about the proposed date of the Gram Sabha meeting, which was on 24th August 2006, and invited the activist for the same to share the concept of Child Friendly Village with

other village leaders and stakeholders. In the meeting the BBA activist shared the concept of Child Friendly Village. This helped BBA to build public opinion in favour of Child Friendly Villages—which is very crucial as the soul of the programme lies in the community embracing the concept.



The activists in a meeting with the Block Education Officer

**Information cum resource center:** BMG's main task is to work in the direction of elimination of child labour with the help of the available data. There is a lack of information at the village level; the BMG, acting as resource center, endeavors to overcome this. Thus, an information cum resource center is located in the village itself. The activist also collects information on various schemes and makes it available to the village panchayat in an organised way. BMG activists are not informers but rather encourage a coordinating committee and advisory committee to be formed in the village to learn how to make and avail of new schemes which will lead to the development of the village. This will also include motivating village people to fight against child labour in their village and work for generating awareness about the importance of education. This center also becomes the hub of all development activity in the village. Knowledge and information of developmental schemes, government programmes and facilities ranging from health to poverty alleviation, unemployment reduction and all other plans are easily made available to the community.

#### b) Meeting with Panchyat Ward Members

In the next step, individual interaction among the village panchayat head, each ward member and BMG activist is organised for the purpose of sharing experiences. This exercise is useful in deriving lessons for the future course of action. Apart from the individual meetings there are also group meetings with the committee members, village heads and

identified activists and local people in each ward. These meetings facilitate the dissemination of information and conceptual clarity to each and every member of the village panchayat.

#### c) Formal Institutional Framework of the BMG

In the next step, the concept of BMG is given a formal institutional framework. The village panchayat passes a resolution to adopt a Bal Mitra Gram and the concept is certified by the committee members.

Consequently, a Bal Mitra Gram Board is put into place in the village. This board is sustained on the resources of the village panchayat itself.

An example of a village in Rajasthan where efforts are being made to develop it into a Child Friendly Village is related in "A Step toward Building Community Partnership".

#### 3) Survey of the Villages

A survey of the villages and village mapping is conducted to collect the relevant information about the socio-economic status, historical background and the developmental and educational strategies followed so far. This information is collected and developed by the BBA field workers and the compiled information is used by the BBA activists during the process. It also gives a clear indication about the situation of child labourers, the number and characteristics of out-of-school children, their background and other relevant information.

#### 4) Withdrawing Children from Work and Getting Them into Mainstream Education

Working children and out-of-school children are identified with the help of the survey. This step is also at the core of the activity. The primary approach is to withdraw the local children from work through pressure-building from within the village community itself. If this approach does not work, then legal measures, including raid and rescue operations, are done.

Constant interaction is maintained with the parents of the children through the help of elected representatives, women's groups and children themselves. BBA follows a "carrot and stick" policy. BBA tries to convince the parents to voluntarily release children from work and motivate employers not to employ children, highlighting the benefits to the overall community (carrot). BBA also organises demonstrations, rallies and marches (the "soft" stick) highlighting the social problems prevailing in the local area to build awareness on child labour. It has provided a platform to sensitise the local community, especially women, to raise these social issues. BBA also uses the tactic of "Mukti Caravan" or "Caravan on Wheels", in which the caravan travels from village to village spreading awareness on the issues of child labour and education through street plays, songs, meetings, etc. The BBA activists of Mukti Caravan help identify at-risk children.

If release of children through persuasion is not possible, then they are rescued using legal intervention (the "hard" stick). BBA has been successful in utilizing Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for the release of bonded children and children working in hazardous occupations in contravention of Bonded Labour Act 1976 and Child Labour Act 1986. For example, in 2004, during a rescue operation to release trafficked Nepalese girls from a circus, the BBA activists were brutally attacked. As the local administration and police had clearly connived with the employer, a Habeas Corpus petition was filed in the High Court and all the girls were released through the court's order.

Out-of-school children are enrolled in school. In BMG villages, a drive is evident among the community to get engaged with the BMG process and withdraw children from work and enrol them in school. Indeed this is done through several rallies, programmes which BBA organises in villages to build awareness on child labour. A School Enrolment Campaign is held to enrol all out-of-school children. The quality of the school also improves with the formation of Bal Panchayat as the children discuss their problems with the adult panchayat and seek solutions. Thus children are involved in the policy and decision-making process at the village level administration.



Women's Group of a BMG village in a meeting

#### Malutana - Towards self reliant attitude

This predominantly agriculture-based village had 37 children working in carpet looms and stone quarries. Through BMG's Intervention, child labour has been eradicated and all 37 children are in school. The BBA activist maintained constant interaction with the parents and also enabled 50 people from child labour families and at-risk families to benefit from income generation schemes (such as the Drought and Relief Schemes from the Government). Bal Panchayat was also formed and the eight members raised and successfully addressed various issues that significantly helped in improving the quality of school:

- a) Getting a telephone line for the school
  - b) Gaining a proper electrical connection
  - c) Successful repair of the school room and construction of toilets in the school
  - d) Effectively stopping illegal production and consumption of illegally made products in the village
  - e) Setting up a library
  - f) Ensuring access to sports items
- 5) Formation of Bal Panchayat (Children Panchayat)

Bal Panchayats (children's assemblies) are constituted in the identified villages with the purpose of ensuring participation of children in the decision-making process and generating leadership qualities and confidence in the children. Elections are organised to choose the representatives of children. During the election process, participation of girls is encouraged in the committees and priority is given to the girls for the post of Sarpanch/Sachiv (President/Secretary).

Meetings of the members of Bal Panchayat are arranged so that they continue to function as the interest group of children and do not become redundant in the course of time. The point is to

ensure that the issues raised by the members of Bal Panchayat will be considered in the village panchayat/working and advisory committee. Various programmes are designed and organised among the school children to infuse interest for various activities related to BMG.

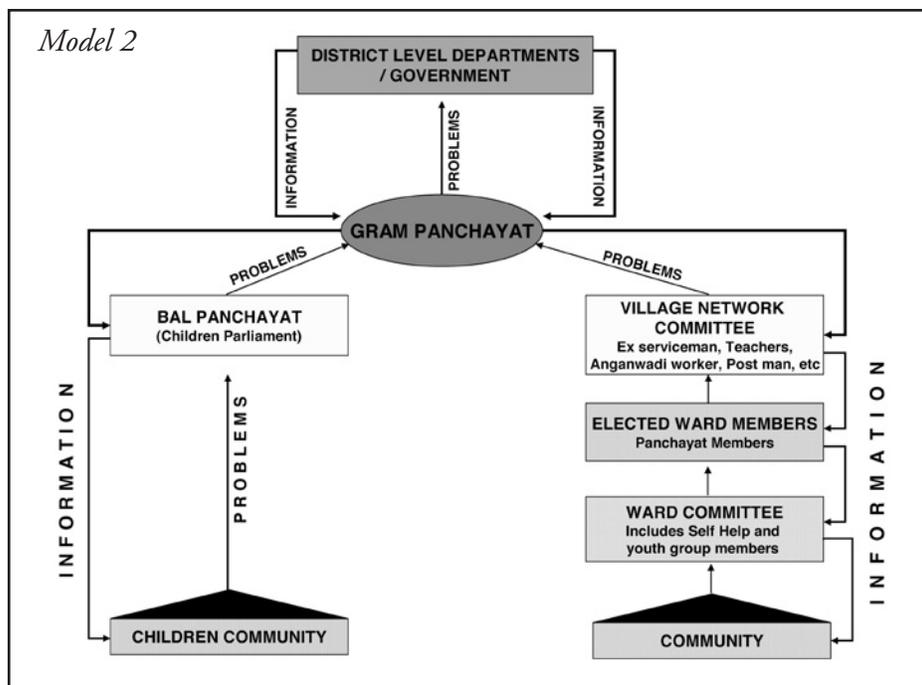
BBA, through the concept of BMG, has chiselled the strategy of protecting the underprivileged children by ensuring their participation in the decision-making process thus promoting equality and also gender equity. The programme addresses gender

inequality because approximately two-thirds of the children withdrawn from work are girls. In the process that follows with regard to the formation of Bal Panchayat girls are encouraged in the election process to become leaders. (See the "Rupkawas - Girls At The Forefront" example on page 8.)

#### 6) Formation of BMG Advisory and Working Committee

The Advisory Committee and Working Committee are constituted in order to execute and monitor the wide range of aforesaid programmes. They play a significant role in ensuring the sustainability of the Child Friendly Village programme. (See Model II.)

- The Advisory Committee formulates plans and programmes while the Working Committee is responsible for executing all these plans.
- In the Advisory Committee, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) teacher (Anganwadi—childcare centre), health administrators, teachers, postmen, ration depot holders, bank employees, village secretaries, etc. are involved.
- Bal Mitra Gram Working Committee consists of ward members, retired persons, women, youth groups, active volunteers of the villages, etc. Appropriate accommodations are made for women to enable their participation.
- Periodic meetings with the members of Bal Mitra Gram Advisory and Working Committee are arranged to discuss various issues relating to the BMG.



#### 7) Capacity-Building Training/Workshop/Excursion Programme

As rights-based awareness is the key element of capacity-building programmes for the members of village panchayat, Bal Panchayat, BMG Working and Advisory Committee and various Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). Capacity-building programmes are organised to ensure that leaders and children of the villages continue to sustain Child Friendly Villages even without the direct support of BBA. These programmes serve to train and develop leadership skills in those involved so that they can provide better services and stand on their own feet.

Exchange programmes are organised among the members to share their experiences and provide them with direct experiences into other programmes being organised in other villages. Exchange programmes also inspire and empower members to do similar things in their own village. A BBA activist is generally a person concerned about child rights, working against any and all exploitation against children, and the upkeep of these fundamental rights. Thus most villagers become activists through BMG process.

BBA regularly organises programmes in schools and villages to build awareness of child labour. This provides a platform to sensitise the local community, especially women, to raise social issues. Seeing the success of the BMG programme, representatives of the panchayat of other villages join us in rallies and ask us for expansion of the BMG programme in their villages, including written requests to this effect.



Further, the BBA activists work in close collaboration with the government officials.

BBA activists are given orientation and training as to how to motivate village representatives and how to be a catalyst for bringing about change. New BBA activists have also been trained by previous BBA activists to successfully implement the BMG model showing how the transferability of this model can be effective.

The BBA activist maintains constant interaction with village representatives. They establish contact and rapport and raise awareness regarding various laws. In order to sustain this, the field activists must work tirelessly to create good rapport with the village representatives. Moreover, as the Bal Mitra Gram is basically a community-based program run for the community benefit, as such it always gains instant rapport within the village. (Example on Pg 8.)

8) **Autonomy:** the Bal Mitra Gram is handed over to the Working Committee members

After all these activities are carried out and all the aforementioned elements of the Child Friendly Village are developed in a particular village, it is declared a model Bal Mitra Gram (BMG). A resolution is passed in the Gram Sabha to this effect and responsibility is given to the Working Committee members to follow up the process. After this, BBA withdraws from active participation in the process and its role becomes limited to providing consultation and moral support to the village people. The village community sustains the model with help of training, experience and the resource support of the local panchayat. The entire process is then replicated in other target villages.

The plan of action creates child-labour free and child friendly villages through access to quality basic education, joyful learning and children's empowerment.

#### **Implementation plan and timeline:**

The following timeline provides a programme outline for the duration of 12 months. The timeline for the project is provided along with the activities that are normally carried out.

(See the Sample Plan of Implementing the BMG Programme.)

#### **Impact of Tactic**

There are more than 150 Child Friendly Villages. Currently BBA is working in 43 villages to make them Bal Mitra Gram or Child Friendly Villages.

The impact of the BMG tactic has been phenomenal in encouraging parents and children to enrol children in schools.

Shri Babulal Gujar, from the Malutana (in an older established BMG) government school in Alwar district, spelled out clearly the important role that the BMG had played in the lives of the children in the village. The constant interaction between the Bal Panchayats and the adult Panchayats had created an impact which brought about a drastic change in the village. The integration of the Bal Panchayat with the mahila mandal (women's group) and Yuva Committee (youth group) were instrumental in bringing about notable developments and passing of various welfare resolutions. The adult panchayat with the help of government schemes such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) constructed the boundary wall of the school and two extra rooms. This has improved the attendance of school children in the primary section considerably.

The community has also come forward and helped the panchayat in collecting an amount of 20,000 rupees for cutting down dead trees in the school and for constructing two rooms in the secondary school building. The DPEP was instrumental in forming the village education committee consisting of 13 members which includes three teachers. The committee meets regularly and determines development programmes.

- Significantly in BMG villages gender sensitization of enrolling children was very positive as a large proportion of girls are also attending schools.
- Lesser drop-out rates exist for boys and girls in BMG villages in primary, middle and high school as compared to non-BMG villages.
- The participation of children with adults in decision-making has also been fruitful in most villages and has indicated dividends in terms of improved infrastructure for schools. Classrooms have been increased, toilets and drinking water facilities have been made available and a significant increase in teachers has been achieved in BMG villages due to children's pressure.
- BMG has helped prevent child labour and exploitation in these villages, since it minimizes vulnerability.
- In BMG villages, a drive is evident among the community to get engaged with the BMG process, withdraw children from work and enrol them in school.

*Sample Plan of Implementing the BMG Programme*

No.	Activities envisaged	In Months											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.1	Ground work, selection and recruitment of personnel and training of staff												
1.2	Establish direct links with the selected villages												
1.3	Introduce the concept of child-friendly villages												
1.4	Involve the participation of the community												
1.5	Establish formal Bal Panchayats												
1.6	Establish the voice of the Bal Panchayats in Village Panchayats												
1.7	Ensure effectiveness & continuity of the village groups												
1.8	Excursions organized for key stakeholders												
1.9	Awareness programmes/ Campaigns												
2.1	Survey the state of the education system and facilities in the targeted villages												
2.2	Gather children's input on the state of the education system in their village												
2.3	Stimulate children's feedback to villages leaders and government education officials on their education												
2.4	Empower marginalised parents to ensure quality education for their children												
2.5	Sensitise teachers to children's needs, wishes and demands												
3.1	Establish links with at the national, state or district levels through selected organisations												
3.2	Developing of IEC material												
3.3	Distribution of IEC material												
3.4	Follow-up with regular communication												
4.1	Identify key contacts in government at the National, State or District level												
4.2	Send IEC material and keep regular correspondence with these contacts												
4.3	Meet regularly with the key governmental contacts to promote the idea												
5.1	Establish documentation system and protocol												
5.2	Collect existing documentation based on BBA's current experience												
5.3	Maintain records of communication with individual Villages												
5.4	Maintain records of communication with key contacts												
5.5	Mid-Term Evaluation												
6	Monitoring and reporting												



## Challenges Faced:

### 1. Gender bias.

India has strong patriarchal traditions. Girls' lives are shaped by customs that are centuries-old. In the villages visited by BBA activists, the girl child is viewed as a liability and girls are not sent to school. BBA activists find parents reluctant to educate their daughters. They are of the view that education of girls brings no return to the parents. Furthermore, as more and more boys are engaged in education, there is a growing reliance on the labour of girls. BBA activists find most of the girls engaged in carpet weaving, agricultural labour or carrying on their usual responsibilities in housework. The scourge of child marriage also keeps girls from going to school. In most of these villages, illegal child marriages are still common. The prevalence of purdah also keeps the girls from going to school. (Purdah is the practice of preventing men from seeing women.)

### 2. Need for on-going rapport building

The overall strategy and tactic is innovative, but in order to sustain it, BBA activists have to work tirelessly to create good rapport with the parents, especially making them agree to send their girl children to schools. BBA activists have to be trained to provide sufficient knowledge and information, to parents in particular and society in general, for utilizing poverty alleviation schemes meant for families below the poverty line, as well as to be able to create awareness. India has instituted a number of national poverty alleviation programmes to assist families, but these families must be aware of their existence in order to avail themselves of the programmes.

### 3. Sustained attention is required in the BMG villages.

Regular monitoring of the old and completed BMG villages is required otherwise the initiative may decrease in due course of time.

### 4. Caste bias and conflicts often result in a regression in development.

For example, in Rajasthan in May-June 2006, a stir between two communities, and subsequent tensions when a government office was burned during rioting resulted in a number of files containing applications for various benefits being destroyed. Applicants needed to re-submit their applications again.

### 5. Lack of human security and terrorism.

For example, due to the large scale naxalite (Maoist) activity in Jharkland, all schools were converted into camps for paramilitary forces, thus harming children's education.

## Lessons Learned

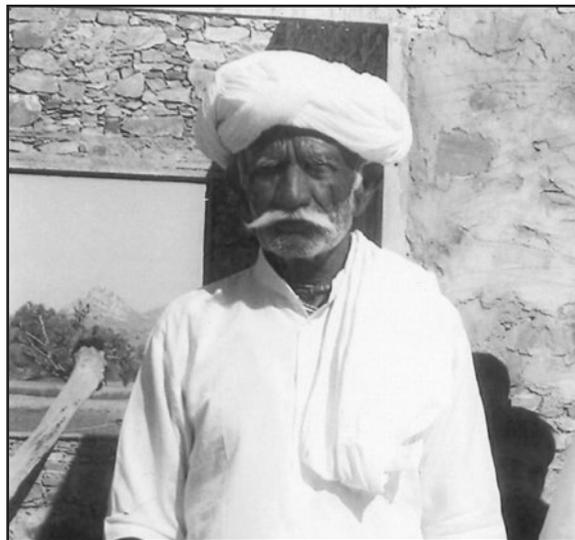
### 1. Ensuring children's participation

Involve children in the policy and decision making processes. In India this involved the Panchayat Raj institution. Bal Panchayats were thus formed. BBA found it necessary to help children gain confidence and provide them with an opportunity to articulate and voice their opinion in this quarter. The Bal Pashikshan programme (Child Orientation Programme) was organised to help children gain confidence and to provide them with an opportunity to articulate and voice their opinion. This has also helped the children to learn a great deal about the process of holding



Mukti Caravan, or Caravan on Wheels, travels from village to village spreading awareness on the issues of child labor and education through street plays, songs, meetings, etc.

Under the child-friendly village Ghewta come many hamlets. In one such hamlet which is at some distance from the village, there is a school named Rajiv Gandhi Pathshala (now called the Government Primary School). The school is run in the lawns of one of the villagers, Mr. Ganpat Lal Yadav and the classes are held under the open sky. The villagers had put up the issue at the panchayat and asked for a school building. But as the Primary School in Ghewta is about two kilometres away and the road leading to the school is in a bad condition, it is very difficult for the children in the hamlet to travel to Ghewta especially during rainy seasons.



Mr. Kalu Ram Yadav who donated his land for the school.



The land donated by Mr. Kalu Ram Yadav on which school building is being constructed

The issue was taken to the panchayat as well as the Gramsabha, Paladi for a building for the school. As a result Rs 3.1 lakh was given under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) for the construction of a school building. But now the problem was that there was no land to build the school on. Previously some land was allotted but it was far from the hamlet. Seeing the urgent need for land, the youth group and Bal Panchayat members raised the issue and sought help of the villagers. This is when Mr. Kalu Ram Yadav, a well-to-do man from the hamlet donated a part of his land for the school. The school building is under construction and the children are very happy and excited about it.

elections, debating and acting on local issues. A great additional benefit is that young children who are part of Bal Panchayat motivate other children who are exploited to come to school.

## 2. Involving the whole family

Involvement of the whole family helps in minimizing the drop-out rate.

## 3. Leadership, skill and education training

The combination of leadership and skill training with educational opportunities improves the children's general educational standard. The programme also raises awareness of the needs of children in panchayat.

## 4. Involvement of community groups

The involvement of different groups of the community

such as women's groups, youth groups, children's parliament, and panchayat members, allows cross-referencing of perceptions about children's vulnerability, so that children particularly at risk of becoming child labourers are identified clearly. Further, since these groups are part of the community, they can follow up with children who re-enter regular school life or find themselves back in child labour situations.

## 5. Community ownership

An important aspect of the BMG programme is the community ownership component where the panchayat recognizes the formed Children's Panchayat. This is shown by their strong commitment to the cause by passing an official resolution, an important guarantor of the sustainability of the programme. Further, each of the BMGs created serve as nodal points for self-clustering of other villages towards



some aspects to child friendliness.

### **Transferability of the tactic**

#### **1. Training and knowledge**

It is important that Child Friendly Village advocates must be trained to provide sufficient knowledge and information to the parents in particular, and society in general, for utilizing poverty alleviation schemes meant for families below the poverty line as well as to be able to create awareness. Even in countries where there are no poverty alleviation schemes, there are always other welfare mechanisms or schemes run by various government bodies.

#### **2. Maintain constant interaction with village representatives**

A Child Friendly Village advocate must maintain constant interaction with village representatives, establishing contact and rapport with them. The advocate must also raise awareness regarding various laws that are currently available or work with them to determine laws that might need to be put in place. Field activists have to work tirelessly to create and sustain good rapport with the village representatives. Moreover, as the Bal Mitra Gram is basically a community-based and community-run program, for the community's benefit, BBA's experience has been that it has always gained instant rapport within the village.

#### **3. Maintain a strong presence at the grassroots level**

BBA has a very strong presence at the grassroots level. BBA also has a tremendous rapport with civil society institutions like the village panchayat, non-governmental organisations, government machinery from state to district level, as well as with media personnel. This is a tremendous advantage and others would need to consider their level of strength and connection when considering adapting this tactic.

#### **4. Maintain close collaboration with local authorities**

BBA has always worked in close collaboration with local authorities in implementing the BMG programme. We have a very good relationship with the district administration. Whenever there is a programme, campaign, or rally organised on a big scale in BMG villages, there is always the physical presence and support of the District Administration officials such as the Block Development officer, State District Magistrate (the highest elected authority district

committee official) in order to provide maximum benefits to the villagers through local structures.

### **Conclusion**

The BMG programme has a specific value as a preventive and protective measure. Our experience shows that prevention must be at the heart of combating the scourge of child labour because effective prevention also means that fewer children's lives are damaged. Other non-governmental organisations can benefit from the BMG programme which aims at raising awareness of the community in preventing child labour. It shows how community organisations and groups can be empowered and supported in development initiatives and in organizing community watch systems to monitor the problem. This can be useful to a wide variety of community issues beyond child labour issues.

However, regarding child labour issues, this tactic shows how community and child participation can be institutionalised through the concept of child friendliness in BMGs—Child Friendly Villages. Through the use of Information, Education and Communication tools and other awareness-generation tactics on social issues like child marriage, female foeticide, Universal Birth Registration, poverty alleviation and optimum utilization of government resources, the tactic and overall strategy aims to lift up the whole community while keeping a child-centric approach and focusing on elimination of child labour and providing education for all. These are all important as they prevent and protect children from exploitation. All are fundamental to the eradication of child labour and exploitation of children.

Child Friendly Villages, a preventive tactic and programme, provide numerous possibilities for greater sustainable action in response to the challenges of present-day child labour and exploitation facing countries around the world today.