

India Consultation Report

On September seventh and eighth 25 children convened in Sundargarh district, Odisha, India for a workshop and consultation on World Bank safeguards. The workshop was sponsored by the Bank Information Center in partnership with DISHA, an Indian civil society group based in Sundargarh district. The participants ranged in age from 14 to 17 and consisted of approximately 2/3 girls and 1/3 boys. Many of the participants came from tribal communities and all had worked with Disha's child rights network previously.

The session included training on World Bank activities and policies and the children had a number of opportunities to work in groups and to share their thoughts on problems in their communities and how these problems could be helped, or made worse, by World Bank activity. Three main areas of concern repeatedly arose throughout the two days whether during discussions about human rights issues, examination of case studies, or providing recommendations for bank policies. These related to poor educational quality, increased alcohol consumption and associated increased violence resulting from increased industrialization, and insufficient protection of the environment including deforestation, pollution, and reliance on nonrenewable resources.

In considering the case study of the Eskom power plant in South Africa the children recommended that the World Bank think of other sources of energy that produce less pollution such as solar, wind, water, and biomass. The children also noted that where hydropower was used, care should be taken that large dams do not cause harms to communities. In their recommendations on issues related to the case study on the RESP-II project in Uzbekistan, the children recommended that assessment processes be improved and that policies preventing child labor, and guaranteeing a good wage for work, be put into place. However, they went beyond the issue of safeguards and suggested that the Bank should refuse lending to Uzbekistan while the country continues practices abusive to children and also suggested the Bank should pressure other governments not to import Uzbek cotton.

After discussing the case studies as a full group, the children each had the opportunity to create posters with their recommendations for changes in bank policies. These recommendations included the following:

- The World Bank should consult the local people wherever they intend to engage in projects and genuinely listen to the problems and concerns of the people. Before giving the loans the World Bank should send appraisal teams to get firsthand information from the communities.
- Development does not need to be done only through coal to generate electricity. The World Bank should focus on renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, biogas, water, etc.
- The land, forest, and waterways should be protected in all development activities. When industrial projects occur measures should be taken to confine smog and other pollutants to maintain air quality.
- The World Bank should not promote polluting industries. Organic farming should be promoted by the Bank and chemical fertilizers should not be used.

- Care should be taken to ensure that children in areas where projects are developed should not face any impediments to their education due to the World Bank supported activities.
- The World Bank should consider the fact that large scale industrial projects often create negative side effects and hence alternative development methods should be explored.
- Children below the age of 18 years should never be engaged in hard labor. All work for both children and adults should be compensated at a proper wage.
- When people are displaced to make way for a project the World Bank should make sure the people are given a new home with proper sanitation facilities, adequate health services, and means for acquiring sufficient nutrition. Children should have access to quality schools near their new homes.
- In considering education projects, or constructing schools for displaced children, the focus needs to be on education quality, going beyond just education access. Good, trained teachers must be engaged and proper education services for children with disabilities should be provided.
- The World Bank should monitor to ensure that funds are used properly for the purpose they were given. They should visit the places where people have been resettled and where projects are ongoing to ensure that rehabilitation plans have been carried out properly.

The children then divided into three groups to design ideal World Bank projects to address problems in their communities. The three issues that the groups chose to examine were water and sanitation, education quality, and deforestation.

The group that looked at education quality noted that they did not see a need for projects to increase education access in their communities as there were already schools present, but that the quality of the teaching and resources was so poor that little learning was taking place. Their suggestions for improving the quality of education included: having a trained teacher that spoke the children's native language, provision of quality mid-day meals to the children to enable them to focus, and monitoring by the Bank where there are educational investments to insure that teaching and learning are taking place in the funded schools.

The group that looked at water and sanitation issues also focused on schools where the sanitation facilities were of poor quality or nonexistent and where, in some cases, the teachers reserved the bathrooms for their own use, requiring children to use the bathroom outside. They thus suggested that a World Bank project to improve water and sanitation in schools would be valuable. This project should first install clean drinking water sources and sanitary toilet facilities in all schools. It would also have a training and monitoring component to teach families and communities about developing a habit of using the toilet. Finally, there would be monitoring to ensure that teachers are permitting children to use the facilities, that the facilities are being kept clean, and that children are not given the responsibility to sanitize the facilities.

With respect to deforestation, the children noted the importance of the forests in the lives of their communities and the negative effects that were arising from deforestation, including reduced agricultural efficiency. They suggested that the World Bank take steps to protect existing forests and to

engage in tree planting campaigns to replace those forests that have already been lost due to industrialization.

The large group then reconvened to hear about the World Bank's portfolio in India. The session finished with a song by the children that their child rights networks had written themselves regarding how, just like a flower needs to be given sun and water and care from a gardener to grow, children need to be cared for to reach their potential.