

EKA – THE COMMUNICATORS' COLLECTIVE



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About Eka – The Communicators' Collective

Eka is a registered non-profit trust under the MP Public Trusts Act. We are a group of Facilitators, Artists, Designers, Writers and Community-Media enthusiasts actively engaged in the study, practice and dissemination of a concept called "Participatory Communication & Action". Eka works with a range of rural, urban and tribal communities and groups, across Madhya Pradesh, India through varied learning programmes on issues related to Communication, Participation, Collective Action, Gender and Child Rights. Our registered office is based in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Vision:

Of a society where all persons irrespective of their class, caste, gender, religion, region have equal access to opportunities for development which enables them to achieve their fullest potential as human beings and uphold their rights to lead a life with dignity.

Mission:

- Empowerment of the most marginalized, vulnerable and voiceless groups in society with skills, information and knowledge to enable them to emerge as equal partners in decision-making processes that impacts their quality of life
- Work towards bringing about a shift in centralized, top-down development communication practices and create avenues / opportunities for integration of rights-based, de-centralized communication processes

Objectives:

- To provide media & communication support to organization, groups and networks
- To create enabling spaces (both physical and virtual) for groups to come together, dialogue, reflect and plan collective action around rights based development
- To build a cadre of communicators with knowledge, skills and belief in facilitating rights-based development communication processes
- To impact and influence development communication strategies and practices to be inclusive of the participation of the most marginalized and voiceless in the society
- To initiate / lead / support / community media initiatives like Participatory Theatre, Community Radio, Puppetry, Songs, Wall Magazines, Bulletins, E-Zines, Blogs, Interactive e-networks, story telling, other cultural folk groups in communities
- To support study groups engaged in research, writing, practice of media tools, methods and processes as used in participatory development communication initiatives
- To support the discourse on alternative media with trainings, conferences, fellowships and study circles.

Eka – Programmes & Processes

Core initiatives of Eka include:

- **Capacity Building** on issues related to Rights, Participation, Communication and Gender.
- **Documentation** of change processes in print, photo, audio and video
- **Cultural interventions** through Performing Media to create awareness on issues
- **Community Development** through work with urban slum communities
- Action-based, **Participatory Research**
- **Design and Development of Communication** resources to support rights-based dialogue and action

We are also involved in project-based interventions around Child Participation, Child Protection, Youth Engagement, Early Marriage, Gender, Communication, Life Skills with Adolescent Girls and Violence Against Women & Girls.

Our Perspective on Media, Communication, Participation & Collective Action

Media has been recognized as a strong catalyst in the process of creating awareness, mobilizing public opinion & action, as well as supporting review and rethink on development agendas. Mainstream media especially impacts the collective consciousness of people, influences opinion building process and enables the building of a critical mass. Community media has the power to break barriers and bring people together on a common platform. Participatory Theatre, Puppetry, Songs, Music, Dance, Story-Telling, Community Radio... are some of the community media that are reviving the lost cultural spaces within communities. It is inclusive by nature, reflects realities, draws from audience responses. Community media initiatives are emerging as the core of rights based development communication processes.

Communication, with an emphasis on Listening, Dialogue - encourages Participation of groups in decision-making processes that will impact the quality of their life. Rights based communication creates opportunities and an enabling environment for groups (especially the most marginalized and voiceless) to transform into proactive partners for change.

Participation as an approach is integral to all rights-based communication. Even at its lowest level, Participation requires the community which never had access to decision-making spaces & opportunities; to enter & participate as a listener. At its highest, a participatory approach allows individuals to explore their potential to their fullest, upholds dignity and rights of all. Mutual trust, a belief in dialogue, continuous reflection, collective action - lie at the core of any participatory process.

About Participatory Communication & Action (PCA)

Participatory Communication & Action (PCA) is essentially an approach of working with groups. PCA seeks to create enabling spaces for groups to come together on a common platform, share, discuss, analyse and plan collective action. PCA groups are involved in a continuous process of review, reflection, action. PCA processes seek to be decentralized, democratic and inclusive by nature. PCA groups attempt to challenge existing status quos, question discrimination, imbalances and injustice. Such a process may be introduced by an external facilitator, with an objective to transfer skills & knowledge of facilitating participatory group activities. The groups are encouraged to explore, experiment, adopt, adapt, create... their own methodologies of working with communities, with a process-oriented and rights based approach.

PCA is experimental, intense by nature and thrives on collective inquiry. Here, community is centre point, process is the key and leadership is shared and ever-evolving. People work on basic values of mutual trust, respect and ensuring participation of all. With a strong belief in dialogue, PCA groups have the potential to influence attitudes and urge a re-think on behaviours.

Process in Detail:

Child Participation: Facilitation of a 2-day Child Participation Event organized by UNICEF and WCD at Gwalior focused on "Listening to Children's Voices". The effort was to engage with children, understand their world view and gather their ideas on enhancing participation of children in decision-making processes.





Child Protection: Year-long Capacity Building programme for strengthening the District Child Protection Unit of Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. In partnership with WCD and UNICEF.



Child Participation: Facilitating Child Participation processes in Shivpuri, Bhind, Gwalior and Bhopal with groups of young people including child reporters and photographers. In partnership with WCD and UNICEF.



Life-skills with Adolescent Girls: series of 3-day trainings with a group of approximately 170 adolescent girls from the Sabla process in Gohad, Bhind. In partnership with WCD and UNICEF



Leadership & Communication: A 10-day residential workshop with girls from the Sabla intervention at Gohad, Bhind and State-run After-care home for girls in Gwalior. A theatre group emerged out of the process which has since then been performing in different villages. In partnership with WCD and UNICEF

Youth Engagement through Participatory Theatre: A year-long PCA intervention with Tribal Youth in Jhabua, Alirajpur and Dhar including Learning Needs Assessment, Capacity Building, Handholding support in field, Campaign and Process Documentation. In partnership with ChildFund India, PRAYAS, SAMPARK and CARD.



Communication for Behaviour & Social Change: A series of 5-day workshops with Anganwadi Workers from 50 villages of Karahal (Sheopur) and Pohari(Shivpuri) to impact the Communication practices followed by the ICDS grounds staff. In partnership with WCD & UNICEF.



Video Documentary: Titled “Khwab Chunne Ki Khwahish” on the issue of Early Marriages of young girls in poor Muslim communities in Hyderabad to Older men from Arab countries. The video was part of an advocacy initiative by the Shaheen Resource Centre, Hyderabad; supported by Oxfam. The video has been recently selected for the VIBGYOR Short & Documentary Film Festival 2014, and the International Film Festival of IAWRT, 2014.



Seminar: Paper presentation on “Violence Against Girls” in the Gwalior-Chambal region and state response to the same. The paper highlighted the work done by the Eka-WCD partnership in Gwalior, on issues related to Gender, Communication & Participation of women & girls. The Seminar was organized by Vacha Resource Centre, Mumbai.

Socio-Legal Awareness around Women & Violence: Facilitated a series of 7 one-day workshops around understanding Gender based discrimination and violence, and legal provisions to address the same. The workshops

were organized jointly by WCD Gwalior and office of the DIG CID (Women's Cell). Teachers from public and private schools, anganwadi workers, ANMs, USHA workers, police personnel and staff from govt run homes were the participants.



Regional Media Resource Centre: Involved in the conceptualization, design and implementation (of activities) of Communication interventions as part of the RMRC, an initiative of the Joint Director's Office, WCD, Gwalior.

Participatory Theatre Workshops: Eka facilitates residential workshops on understanding the concept and practice of Participatory Theatre with non-supported / voluntary groups as well as others. The most recent one was with the staff of Shaheen, Hyderabad as part of outreach plan for the 16 days of Activism period.



Free & Open Source Software: Eka facilitates and supports workshops on introducing the concept and application of FOSS as an option to proprietary software. Eka also supports organizations to use Drupal (FOSS Content Management System) for designing their websites. Eka's own website is designed using Drupal.



Participatory Theatre with SHGs: Facilitated residential workshops with groups of tribal women - also SHG members from the Nari Shakti Mahila Sangh, Tejaswini Mahila Sangh, Narmada Mahila Sangh and the Durgavati Mahila Sangh in Balaghat, Mandla, Hoshangabad and Dindori districts. The group in Balaghat and Hoshangabad formed a traveling theatre troupe that performed in villages on issues related to Violence against Women.



Workshops: Facilitated a series of five 3-day Orientation workshops with Anganwadi Workers from Gwalior District on Understanding Gender & Communication. The Anganwadi workers belong to a group called "Bandho Mutthi Behena". Organized by WCD, Gwalior.



Workshop: Facilitated a 3-day workshop on PCA with a group of volunteers from Chhattisgarh & Madhya Pradesh. Participants had an interest in learning about participatory approaches of working with groups and communities.

