



Photo Credit: Pallav Thudgar



EKA – The Communicators' Collective

ANNUAL REPORT

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Eka is a registered non-profit trust under the MP Public Trusts Act, 1959. Eka is a collective 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 diverse range of organizations, groups and communities on issues related to Communication, Participation, Collective Action, Gender and Child Rights across districts in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Maharashtra. Our registered office is based in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. We have a field office in Old City Bhopal where our Child Protection Initiatives are nested. Eka works through certain funded projects and self-supported initiatives as well. We have a large base of volunteers across states who pool in their interests and expertise to create a vibrant body of work in Eka. Since the past one year, we have been focusing on setting up our Urban Initiative in Bhopal focused on working with the most marginalized communities in the urban set up. UNICEF Madhya Pradesh supports a large part of this urban initiative, through the project, “Creating a Safe Environment for Children in Urban Bhopal”.

Our 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.

Our 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
- Direct Community Initiative in Urban Bhopal

Eka is also a partner organization that supports communication initiatives in the Gwalior-Chambal region through the Regional Media Resource Centre Initiative. The RMRC works on highlighting issues related to gender, media, development, communication and rights by creating open platforms for sharing, discussions and debates; with a range of audiences.

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

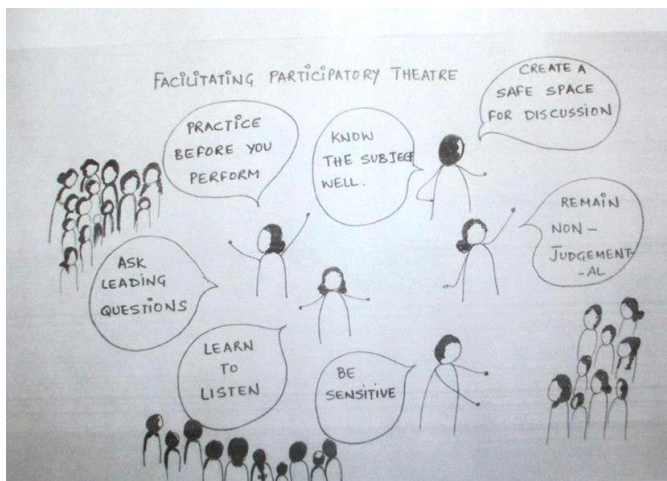
media especially impacts the collective consciousness of people, influences opinion building process and enables the building of a critical mass. Community media has the power to break barriers and bring people together on a common platform. Participatory Theatre, Puppetry, Songs, Music, Dance, Story-Telling, 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)

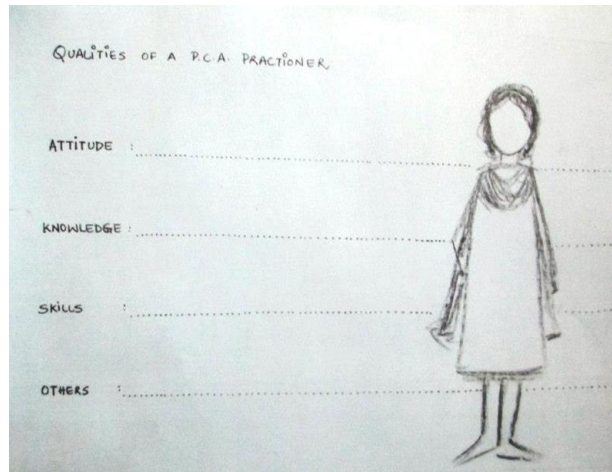
Participatory Communication & Action (PCA) is essentially an approach of working with groups. PCA



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.

Highlights of processes taken up by Eka during the year:

IAWRT Film Festival:

in Gwalior in association with the Regional Media Resource Centre Gwalior, hosted by the Joint Director's office, Gwalior-Chambal Region. The IAWRT International Film Festival was organized in MP for the second year jointly by Eka and WCD, Gwalior. The festival was an opportunity to showcase documentary film-makers works around Gender and Social Justice.

The festival was inaugurated by the District Collector Mr. Narahari. A range of films were screened with a very diverse audience from the region including WCD Anganwadi Workers, Programme Officers, Shaurya Dal members, USHA workers, writers, artists, social workers, theatre persons and other people from the general public. All screenings were followed by a discussion facilitated by a panel of experts. Apart from the screenings at the RMRC, a public screening at FunCinemas in Gwalior saw the documentary "Gulaabi Gang" run to a packed audience. Joint Director, Suresh Tomar facilitated discussions alongwith other cultural activists in the region.



Eka facilitates “Participatory Communication & Action” orientation workshops with various groups in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. Some of these orientations have seen the emergence of youth leaders with an interest and passion for working on social change issues. Eka makes efforts to link the youth leaders from various groups to youth development initiatives across states.

Participatory Theatre:

as a process for engaging with and empowering the most marginalized groups is a core area of work with Eka. A 5 day workshop with members of Self-Help groups of women associated with PRADAN Mandla was facilitated in April 2015. The group was introduced to the concept and practice of “Theatre of the Oppressed”. The group later travelled to villages with their performances followed by a discussion on the issues taken up in the play. The workshop was facilitated by a team from Eka led by Avijit Solanki, Uttara Banjare and Mukesh Shukla.



Workshops with Women’s groups:

to build an awareness about Violence especially Domestic Violence. The series of orientations were an effort by the Urban Initiative of Eka to understand the status of women belonging to Minority groups

in urban slums of Bhopal. The series of workshops helped us better define the need and scope of initiating a counseling unit in some of the bastis that would provide socio-legal support to women affected by violence in homes and work spaces. Eka reached out to about 500 women during these orientation programmes.

Communication for Behaviour & Social Change:

Eka's communication team is involved in supporting development of Communication plans with departments, organizations and voluntary groups. During the year, Eka was involved in evolving and writing a draft approach paper on "Communication for Behavior and Social Change" facilitated by the then ICDS Commissioner. Consultation meets were held to share information about the CBSC approach with senior ICDS staff and grassroots workers as well. The CBSC approach presents a bottom-up approach to developing Communication plans spear-headed by grassroots workers of the departments. CBSC approach if adopted helps departments to develop locally specific, culturally appropriate, need based plans with maximum participation and ownership by the department staff. Most departments currently struggle with the resistance from the ground level units, after having pushed centralized plans onto its staff. The CBSC approach received extensive support from the ICDS.

Listening to the Communicators:

Communication Team from Eka carried out a study titled "Listening to the Communicators" - Mapping of Learning & Communication Trends at the Grassroots in the ICDS with a focus on Health & Nutrition.



The scope of the study involved (a) understanding the trends in Learning and Communication practices of the ICDS staff in Madhya Pradesh, especially on issues related to Health & Nutrition (b) study of the usage of the learning and communication resources to aid & enhance capacities of the staff to carry out ICDS tasks / activities effectively (c) carry out theme-based review of the technical

content and presentation of the knowledge resources (d) explore the range of formats of the communication resources (e) understand the prevalence and effectiveness of cultural modes of learning and communication (f) carry out a needs assessment to understand learning & communication preferences of the ICDS staff, for enhancing their work with communities (g) collect, collate, analyze the findings of the Mapping process. (h) Share the findings in a State Consultation meet and a written document. The study was conducted across the State in 10 cultural zones, in representative districts.

Design and Development of a Facilitators' Manual

under the SUPOSHAN Abhiyaan hosted by the ICDS, Government of Madhya Pradesh, titled "Suposhan Kunji" for grassroots workers of the ICDS. The pictorial tool for Anganwadi workers had components for counseling, creating awareness, adopting best practices in health & nutrition of children and adapting tools to suit local information & communication needs of Anganwadi workers across regions. The Facilitators' Manual was widely adopted throughout the State.

Mapping for Preparing District Child Protection Plan – Shivpuri, MP

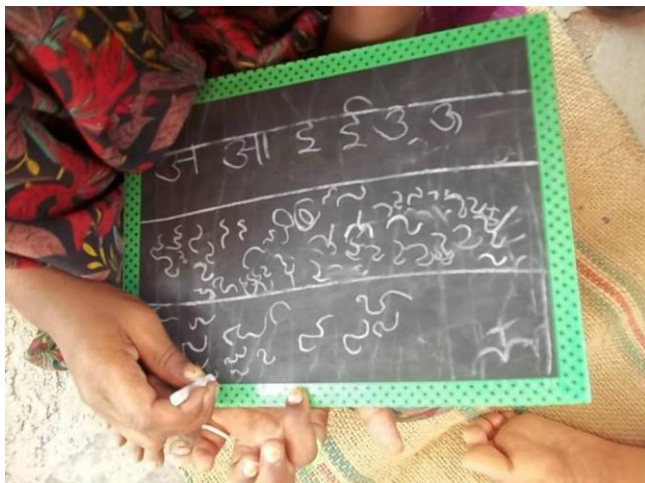
Eka carried out a District Mapping / Need Assessment for Developing District Level Child Protection Plans for Shivpuri District, in collaboration with UNICEF Madhya Pradesh and DCPU Shivpuri. The Mapping process involved preparation of participatory tools for qualitative Mapping, Workshops to orient the teams, District level child protection meet, that the

The objective of the Mapping was to identify and map child protection issues and gaps, including a bottle neck analysis at district, block and village level. As also, to develop district specific child protection plans that would later feed into the State Government's proposal for implementation of the ICPS.

The scope of the Mapping included (a) carrying out a comprehensive district need assessment to identify child protection issues, concerns, gaps and barriers in the district (b) identify geographical areas / communities within the district that were vulnerable to child protection violations (c) Map children coming under the CNCP category, especially children living on the street, railway stations, children in begging, child labour, and orphaned / single parented child, and children in conflict with law. (d) Analyse issues that affect children such as child marriage, child labour, child sexual abuse, violence against children, trafficking, corporal punishment and any other issues of protection that may prevail in the district (e) carry out a bottleneck analysis of the JJ System and service delivery

mechanisms, including residential institutions, Childline, DCPU, CWC, JJB, SJPU, DLSA, etc. (f) Based on the above, develop a comprehensive and appropriate plan for strengthening child protection mechanisms in the district.

Eka developed a set of participatory tools for the Mapping process and worked through District Consultations, Workshops, Field Visits for Mapping, Block level meetings, Department meetings and data analysis workshops to evolve the District Child Protection Plan which was shared with departments and DCPU through a District level meeting at the Collectorate.



exist in an urban milieu negotiating a range of discriminations, injustice, violence, abuse and exploitation in their environments. The publication brings to fore voices and situations of girls from a range of marginalized backgrounds. The final product is yet to be printed.

Setting up of the Urban Initiative:

Eka carried out a short survey with 500 families to understand the need and scope of setting up Resource Centres for children in Rahul Nagar and Aishbagh bastis. A team of volunteers worked to understand the ground situation and create a set up where the urban initiative could be nested. The survey helped us zero down to two bastis – Rahul Nagar (Pampapur) with a large population of the Valmiki community which cleaned up the city sewers, roads and bins while Aishbagh is a Muslim dominated basti with a long history of deprivation and neglect from the civic authorities. During the field work, volunteers were overwhelmed with the cases of child protection, violence against women and discrimination that they encountered in the poorest of the pockets. It was a learning experience for the team and the decision to work on issues related to exclusion, discrimination, gender, rights was a unanimous one.





The Urban Initiative thus began as a voluntary process with a group of volunteers – youth from the community and engineering colleges along with the trustees and core group members of Eka. Using



the concept of a Mobile Library, this collective began their outreach process in various urban slum communities. A second hand van was converted into a library that arrived with a set of facilitators and publications in a basti. The team would set up a creative circle in a selected spot, engaging with children through games and reading books, sharing stories and encouraging children to express themselves through drawings, telling stories, art and craft activities as well as through writing. The mobile library soon became very popular with children, especially working and out of school children. Soon enough, there was a team of older children in the bastis willing to volunteer to run the library. Local schools in the community expressed their willingness to house the library and create space for children to access its resources and activities. On its part, the community started giving space for the library to be run in their lanes, as also make efforts to mobilize children for the activities. The mobile library soon began to be stationed in certain key pockets



within the community with attendance by young people and adults as well. As children started sharing their issues – early marriage, abuse, exploitation at work place, lack of adult care, discrimination, neglect among others – the team started taking up issues beginning with sharing information with community adults, reaching out to neglected children and creating safety nets for them with community dialogue, enrolling children in schools, helping families to access birth registration services, linking children in need with services like childline and health services, negotiating with the police thana to look into cases of missing children and thereby bringing

children’s issues into the focus of the community. The focus on reaching out to children in need brought us in contact with the most marginalized families. Eka’s work in the communities thus began, taking off from the committed efforts of a dynamic group of volunteers who were interested in contributing back to the society.

With UNICEF Madhya Pradesh office extending its support to mould this voluntary effort into a full-fledged initiative around Child Protection, it was an opportunity for Eka to further expand its work with children, especially adolescents and women as well. The project titled “Creating a Safe Environment for Children in Urban Bhopal” had three other partners – AARAMBH, Muskaan and UNICEF – all working together to create a safe environment for all children in urban Bhopal. The 3 year long initiative has a focus on building and strengthening child protection mechanisms at the community level and in the government as well. With a strong component of community work through mobilization and collectivization, the project seeks to establish collectives of children, youth and other adults that would work cohesively with the government departments and duty bearers to qualitatively impact the status of children in the community. ACE, a Delhi based organization supports the initiative by providing inputs to carry out a participatory mapping process to understand the status of children’s environments, by engaging with children themselves as researchers, and using the data to evolve a Basti and Ward level Child Protection Plan that would later impact the District Child Protection Plan.

Some of the key processes in this initiative during the year included setting up of the Resource Centres in Rahul Nagar and Aishbagh, Mobilization of children into groups, organizing children into collectives, setting up of a counseling unit for providing socio-legal support to women survivors of Domestic Violence, emergence of a youth collective, Learning visits to organizations and children’s collectives to gain a perspective on participatory processes of engaging with children, Working on the concept of “Children as Researchers”, Mass media events to support the city-level voice around child protection, work with neighbourhood schools in the basti and setting up of an Alliance that had interests in Child Protection.



