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Efforts on to formulate Disaster Management Policy

Staff Reporter

With special concern for protecting children in catastrophic situations

NAGAPATTINAM: An effort to transform victimhood of children in disaster situations into that of active agency in disaster management is slowly under way in the State. This was the agenda behind the district level consultative meeting on Child Rights during emergencies held here by Save the Children on behalf of the State Government on Thursday. This is a prelude to the formulation of a Disaster Management Policy by the State Disaster Management Agency.

The object was to ascertain requirements and recommendations from the stakeholders themselves through meetings with NGOs and line departments and incorporate them into the proposed disaster management policy. The meeting with the NGO's will be followed by one with line departments shortly after which the recommendations ascertained would serve as parameters in the formulation of the National Policy on Disaster Management. The exercise is grounded on the principle that disaster relief agenda should emerge from those potential disaster victims themselves.

Accordingly, to involve children in disaster management is tantamount to create a "culture" of disaster management. Its aim is to mobilise children as agents of change not just in times of disasters such as cyclone or floods, but also in times of biological hazards that render them vulnerable. This consultative process also attempts to engage with the best practices that are already in use and regularise them into the proposed policy.

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Written by Administrator

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Also on agenda is to conduct a school survey and inculcate disaster management culture into school curriculum along with formation of school disaster management committees. Besides, focus would also be on excluded children like school drop-outs. The current National Contingency Fund that deals with disaster management needs an overhaul through the formulation of a uniform, institutionalised relief code with children as legitimate participants.

Save the Children's Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction focuses on child rights, child protection, health, education and school safety. In the last Gram Sabha held here, children were inducted into the community based disaster risk reduction programme. The recommendations would serve as benchmarks in the formulation of the Policy. The consultative process with line departments and NGO's is being held in six districts viz, Kanyakumari, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Thiruvavarur, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram.

The process is being resourced through the aid and expertise of Programme Coordinator P. Balamurugan of Save the Children and Disaster Risk Management consultants, Suresh Mariaselvam and K. M. Parivelan.