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SHAISHAV

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*There can be no keener revelation of a society's
soul than the way in which it treats its children*

- Nelson Mandela



**More than 40% of India's population
is children, and even after six decades
of independence and democratic rule,
many continue to be deprived of their
basic rights in India:**

- It is estimated that there are between 50 and 60 million child labourers in India, making up at least 12% of the child population
- More than 21 million children aged 6-10 are out of school, and 34% leave before they reach the end of primary school
- 12% of girls never see the inside of a classroom
- Even in comparatively developed states like Gujarat, the juvenile sex ratio is shockingly low. In 2011 there were 886 girls aged 0-6 for every 1000 boys, and just 852 in urban areas.



*We are guilty of many errors and
many faults but our worst crime
is abandoning the children,
neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can
wait. The child cannot. Right now
is the time his bones are being
formed, his blood is being made,
and his senses are being
developed. To him we cannot
answer '**Tomorrow**'. His name is
'**Today**'.*

- Gabriela Mistral

Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

We believe that
a child is innocent and pure...
a symbol of love, strength, and
happiness... endless, deep, and
free... a source of life.

Healthy Children
Adults
Society



Shaishav - An Introduction

Shaishav was established in 1992, as an organisation committed to realising the basic rights of children, particularly the underprivileged. We envision the creation of a society where each child achieves the potential she or he is born with, becomes independent, and contributes to the holistic and sustainable development of a world that is just, peaceful, and humane.

Shaishav believes that all children should enjoy basic rights and experience the joys of childhood equally; that all children should become productive, socially sensitive, and democratically skilled citizens.

Shaishav Strives To:

- Ensure that all children achieve the basic right to free and compulsory education
- Create a child centred environment and provide opportunities where children and youth can realise their basic rights
- Develop learning resources for children and make them available to all those who can influence children's holistic development

Evolution

In 1995 Shaishav conducted a survey in Bhavnagar, a city in the state of Gujarat, India. Close to 13,000 child labourers were identified working in Bhavnagar, in 106 occupations. This was the largest study ever done by a grass-roots organisation in India, and was quoted in the Supreme Court's landmark judgement on child labour in 1996. Since then, Shaishav has conducted field programmes based among underprivileged communities, mostly in the slum areas of Bhavnagar. We work at the local level to empower communities to be protagonists for their own rights. In this capacity, Shaishav has conducted community-based programmes such as Balsena, Tarunsena and Balghars, in 24 communities and 36 government schools in the city.

Programmes:

Balsena and Tarunsena: Empowerment Through Collective Strength

Shaishav facilitates these two community-based organisations (CBOs) designed to provide collective strength to children and youth. Balsena, literally "children's force", is a collective of children and the first of its kind in Gujarat. Here, children learn to recognise their rights and campaign for

them. Balsena is run, managed and led by children with facilitative support from Shaishav. All decisions related to activities, programmes, and electing leaders are made by the children themselves. In 2011 it had approximately 2500 members aged 6-18, across 60 teams. Regular leadership training enables the children to identify issues that affect their lives and aspirations, and explore strategies to resolve them. Balsena members are involved in the following programmes:

- Balsena Points** were launched in response to the communal violence that occurred across Gujarat in 2002, with the theme "play together, stay together". They now function as teams in which Balsena children can get together to participate in activities. In 2011, 42 were operating in slum areas, and a further 18 in schools.
- Savings Bank** enables children to save money independently, and gives them skills in financial responsibility and decision-making. As of May 2011, 1134 children had saved 631,915 rupees (over US\$14,000).
- Adolescent Programme** provides more than 350 girls and boys with information, support, and advice about issues faced during their adolescent years.

- Book Bank** was implemented in response to the lack of appropriate educational materials. It provides Balsena and Balghar members with access to textbooks and other learning materials in three different centres.

- Events and training programmes** such as Leadership Camp, Vacation Camp and children's fairs are run throughout the year

The Indian Government, in conjunction with local organisations, created the **CHILDLINE** service to provide emergency support to children across India. Shaishav have set up the service in Bhavnagar, and Balsena children have played an important role in spreading its message. The line provides a 24-hour, toll free service for children in crisis, and in need of care and protection.

Tarunsena is a youth collective established in 2008 to provide a platform for those who have graduated from Balsena. The collective has approximately 60 members, who are working together to tackle children's and community issues, as well as providing guidance and support for Balsena.

