

Third Edition of

Leadership Dialogues

Empower. Strengthen. Innovate.
Towards a Safer Future for Our Children

SPEAKERS

Bios & Highlights





Mr. Banku Bihari Sarkar

Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF, Bihar

Banku has over 25 years of dynamic experience in the development sector, currently serving as the Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF Bihar Field Office. He leads programs focusing on child rights, prevention of child labor, education access, and support services for vulnerable children. Banku has a background in social work and a strong commitment to advocating for children's rights and well-being. He has played a pivotal role in implementing child protection legislation and initiatives in Bihar, collaborating closely with government bodies, NGOs, and stakeholders to strengthen child protection systems and policies. His expertise includes Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and cyber safety in partnership with education and law enforcement agencies.

Key Highlights by Mr. Banku Bihari Sarkar

“Effective gatekeeping in child welfare involves complex negotiations and strong partnerships among government bodies and other stakeholders. Multi-departmental coordination and collaboration are essential to create a robust system to promote children's safety and protection.”

“PRI members play a vital role in mapping and identifying families in poverty or distress, as these circumstances increase the risk of children becoming separated from their families or facing exploitation.”

“While there are child protection officers at the district level, their absence at the panchayat level has the potential to create a gap in the monitoring and implementation of child protection measures at the grassroots level.”

“Before the launch of the Mission Vatsalya initiative in 2017-18, the role of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) was distinct. However, following the implementation of Mission Vatsalya, the role of CPCs has been aligned with the guidelines of the mission.”

“The Government of Bihar is investing resources to make the CPCs functional and effective, and is also working towards identifying indicators to measure the impact of these committees on child protection.”



Adv. Dr. Suchitra Ghogare-Katkar

Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Satara,
Government of Maharashtra

Suchitra is the Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee in Satara. She also serves as a Member of the District Legal Services Authority and the Victim Compensation Scheme Committee at the District Court in Satara. A multifaceted individual, Suchitra is a spirited lawyer, former Juvenile Justice Board member, and lecturer. She is a published author and a regular contributor to newspapers. Suchitra has closely collaborated with NGOs in Maharashtra, focusing on child rights awareness, the POCSO Act, and disability issues.

Key Highlights by Adv. Dr. Suchitra Ghogare-Katkar

“When a child comes before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), we first give them the confidence that here, everyone works for the safety of children and the welfare of children.”

“Depending on the suitability of the home environment, the children are either kept in a Child Care Institution (CCI) or sent to live with their relatives, following the due process outlined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.”

“The CWC also handles cases involving children from other states, extending their support and intervention beyond their jurisdiction.”

“A staggering 96% of the cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act involve perpetrators known to the victims, highlighting the importance of ensuring a safe social environment for children.”

“The most essential support needed by CWC is counseling and psychosocial assistance, making the role of the counselor crucial when working with families.”



Ms. Nirmala

Secretary, Sarvo Prayas Sansthan, Madhubani, Bihar

Nirmala has over three decades of experience passionately advocating for the rights and well-being of children. She currently serves as the secretary of Sarvo Prayas Sansthan, an organization she founded in 2004 dedicated to children's care and protection. Under her leadership, Sarvo Prayas Sansthan has implemented a variety of innovative programs designed to address the multifaceted needs of children in distress. Nirmala is a strong advocate for systemic change and was awarded the Women Exemplar Program 2020 by CII Foundation for her exemplary work in the field of child care and protection.



Key Highlights by Ms. Nirmala

“PRI (Panchayati Raj Institution) is the largest mechanism that connects government with the community. Elected by the community itself, the words and actions of PRIs have a significant impact on the community and society.”

“Involvement of PRI members in Child Protection Committees from the beginning has helped in capacity building and increased their interest in child protection initiatives.”

“PRI members have a significant influence on community members, which can be leveraged for effective implementation of child protection measures.”

“PRI members play a crucial role in family strengthening by monitoring spaces where children are present and ensuring their safety and well-being. They actively identify and follow up on cases of children missing school, engaging with parents, teachers, and involving the CWC if the issue persists. They also ensure that students are not employed or involved in the mid-day meal program, which could potentially lead to exploitation or hinder their education.”

“PRI members ensure that community members have access to essential services and entitlements, such as Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards and Aadhaar cards, which can help in identifying and supporting vulnerable families. They also monitor roads and lanes where girls may face harassment or assault, taking necessary actions to address such issues and create a safer environment.”



Ms. Sumitra Devi

Ward Member and Secretary, Village-level Child Protection Committee, Madhubani, Bihar

Sumitra is from Madhubani, Bihar. She is the Ward Member and Secretary of the Village-Level Child Protection Committee in Madhubani too and has dealt with critical cases related to children such as of child marriage, child trafficking and out-of-school children etc.

Key Highlights by Ms. Sumitra Devi

“Educating communities about the negative consequences of early marriage, child labor and other such issues is very important. Sustained community sensitization programs are crucial for addressing these social evils. All departments and ministries need to work collaboratively to ensure the overall well-being of children.”

“Strengthening and empowering these stakeholders is crucial for creating a robust system that can effectively ensure children's safety and well-being.”

“Monitoring and ensuring the quality of food provided to children is of utmost importance, as proper nutrition is fundamental for their physical and cognitive development, impacting their overall well-being and future potential.”