

Thozhamai, supported by UNICEF, has been promoting Child Rights advocacy across diverse sectors such as education, media, government, and social influencers in Tamil Nadu.

### **June 2023**: Focus on Media Engagement and the Release of 'Child Rights Under the Spotlight'

1 June 2023 – Book Preparation:

In early June, preparations began for the creation of a critical book titled 'Child Rights Under the Spotlight' (ஊடகத்தின் ஒளிவிளக்கில் குழந்தை உரிமைகள்). This book was designed as a comprehensive resource for media professionals, aimed at guiding them on child rights issues. The book covered essential topics, including:

- Defining a child, as per international and national legal frameworks.
- A detailed discussion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), highlighting its key principles.
- Various forms of violence against children, with references to relevant legal frameworks such as the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and Juvenile Justice Act.
- Guidelines for the media issued by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on how to report stories involving children in a sensitive and responsible manner.
- A clear list of “do’s and don’ts” for media professionals when covering stories related to children, aimed at preventing exploitation or harm.

The book was officially released on 21 June 2023, as part of a district-level event in Thoothukudi, focusing on sensitizing journalists on child-centric reporting.

15 June 2023 – Informal Meeting with Media Editors and Sub-editors:

An informal meeting was planned with editors and sub-editors from various media houses to discuss the role of media in promoting child rights. Invitations were sent, and preparations were made, but due to unforeseen circumstances, the meeting was postponed to 11 July 2023.

21 June 2023 – District-Level Sensitization on Child-Centric Reporting:

On this day, a district-level sensitization workshop was held in Thoothukudi, organized by Thozhamai in collaboration with UNICEF and facilitated by the District Child Protection Unit. The event took place at Hotel DSF Grand Plaza, with a focus on training journalists on responsible and child-sensitive reporting practices.

The event began with a welcome address from Mr. Alex L, District Child Protection Officer, followed by insights from notable speakers such as:

- Mr. A. Devaneyan, Director of Thozhamai, who emphasized the importance of child rights and media's role in safeguarding them.
- Ms. S. Rathi Dhevi, District Social Welfare Officer, who discussed local efforts to combat child marriages.

- Mr. Ruben Kishore, Chairperson of the District Child Welfare Committee, who stressed the need to support children in care and protection.
- Dr. A. John Suresh, Member of the Juvenile Justice Board, who elaborated on supporting children in conflict with the law.
- Mr. Mani, Senior Journalist from Chennai, who shared perspectives on how media can advocate for child rights through responsible journalism.

The highlight of the event was the release of the book 'Child Rights Under the Spotlight'. It was launched by Senior Journalist Mani and distributed to senior journalists and media professionals in attendance. The session concluded with an interactive discussion on the way forward for child-centric reporting in the media.

### **July 2023**: Strengthening Engagement with Media and Social Media Influencers

11 July 2023 – Informal Consultation with Media Editors:

The postponed meeting with editors and sub-editors was rescheduled and held on 11 July 2023. The event aimed to engage journalists in deeper discussions about the media's role in advocating for child rights. Attendees included UNICEF Tamil Nadu and Kerala Chief K.L. Rao, Communication Specialist Sam Sudheer, and several editors and senior journalists from leading media houses.

The discussions focused on:

- Challenges faced by journalists in reporting child-related stories.
- The importance of promoting positive stories about children while being sensitive to their vulnerabilities.
- The impact of fake news on children and the need for media to responsibly filter information.
- Media's potential role as a messenger, monitor, and mobilizer for creating a child-rights-focused culture.

At the end of the event, the 'Child Rights Under the Spotlight' guidebook was officially launched by Mr. K.L. Rao, and the first copies were received by senior journalists Mr. Mani and Mr. Bharathi Thamizhan.

18 July 2023 – Meeting with Social Media Influencers:

A consultation session on the role of social media influencers in advocating for child rights was held in Chennai. Social media influencers from platforms like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook gathered to discuss how they could use their platforms to promote child-friendly content and raise awareness on child rights.

Key discussions included:

- Mr. Vinod Arumugam, a cyber safety expert, who provided guidance on creating safe and engaging child-focused content.
- Ms. Panimalar Panneerselvam, a journalist and social media influencer, who spoke about the power of social media in amplifying children's voices.
- Ms. Stegana Jency, Director of the Centre for Child Rights and Development, who highlighted the challenges faced by adolescents on social media.

An open discussion allowed influencers to share ideas on ensuring responsible content creation for children. The meeting concluded with the creation of a Children Media Watch initiative, a platform that will monitor media content to ensure child-friendly standards.

### **August 2023:** Engaging with Community Influencers and Political Parties

11 August 2023 – Community Influencers Meeting:

Thozhamai, along with UNICEF, convened a meeting with community-level influencers in fields such as sports, public health, law, and public policy. The primary focus was on addressing the Girl Child's Right to Play, discussing the need for more inclusive recreational spaces for girls. It was noted that many school playgrounds remain inaccessible for girls, and the absence of a sports quota for women has further discouraged their participation in physical activities.

A proposal was drafted to bring this matter to the attention of the Minister of Youth Welfare and Sports Development, Mr. Udhayanidhi Stalin.

17 August 2023 – Political Parties Engagement:

This event focused on engaging political parties to promote child rights within political spaces. Participants included two MLAs from the ruling party and spokespersons from prominent political parties. Key topics discussed were:

- Representation of children in political agendas.
- Protecting children from online exploitation.
- Parent training in understanding child rights.
- Eradication of caste, religious, and racial discrimination in schools.

Participants advocated for further training on child rights within political parties and the appointment of point persons responsible for child rights initiatives.

### **September 2023:** Social Media Engagement and Postponed Influencer Event

19 September 2023 – Postponed Influencer Engagement:

A planned event with state government influencers to promote child rights was postponed due to scheduling conflicts but will be rescheduled for a future date.

29 September 2023 – Social Media Influencers Consultation:

A consultation session was held with prominent social media influencers to explore how platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram can be used to advocate for child rights. Participants from channels such as U2Brutus, Tribes Karikalan, Madras Review, and others discussed crafting child-friendly content and ensuring responsible online presence.

### **October 2023**: Sensitization Workshops and Engagement with Government Departments

28 October 2023 – District-Level Sensitization Workshop (Thanjavur):

A district-level workshop on child-centric reporting was held in Thanjavur. Prof. Dr. Radha from Central University Tiruvarur and Senior Journalist Mr. Mani led discussions with journalists on local interventions for child-centric reporting.

30 October 2023 – Engagement with State Machinery:

Thozhamai and UNICEF, in partnership with the Integrated Training Centre for Social Empowerment (ITCSE), organized a significant event with key government departments, including the Department of Social Welfare, Tamil Nadu Police, and the Tamil Nadu Labour Welfare Board. The goal was to promote child rights advocacy across state departments.

A key outcome was the suggestion to create a framework and mapping system to ensure that child rights are upheld across all government departments, fostering multi-departmental collaboration.

These initiatives reflect a sustained and strategic effort by Thozhamai and UNICEF to advocate for child rights across different societal sectors, promoting child-centric policies and ethical media reporting throughout Tamil Nadu.