

The Block Level Task Force for Child Rights



Photo: The monthly BLTF meeting in Malpura, discussing children's services.

Our goal has always been to work in collaboration with parents and government officials to enable children to claim their rights. We do not want to set up new systems of working, but improve those that already exist. In the past there had been no

platform to talk to government officials about children's problems and to share the feedback we received from villagers. No one was taking specific responsibility for child rights issues.

After much discussion GVNML convinced the Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM), who is head of Block Level Officials, to establish the Block Level Task Force (BLTF) in Malpura Block. Monthly meetings facilitated by GVNML include Block Development Officers, Police, Women and Child Development Officers, electricity board representatives, members of the Public Health Engineering Department and the Education Department. In each meeting GVNML presents research data and case studies on a particular issue to update officials on the real position of villagers in their area of responsibility. A government report claimed child marriage had been eliminated in 10 villages, but GVNML were able to provide data that marriages had taken place, including names, age, caste, gender, economic status and whether they were attending school. Block level officials can't ignore these facts so are forced to act by the SDM, who gives each person responsibility for implementing a joint action plan. Progress is reviewed in the following meeting and proper action must be taken within 4 months.

It takes significant effort to set up a BLTF, with not only collaboration from the SDM required, but also new data collected each month on child rights to create quality presentations. It is through these meetings that we are able to update government officials on the real situation in rural Rajasthan and push the government machinery into action, so we hope to be able to expand BLTFs into other blocks.