

## **AVENUES FOR FAMILY STRENGTHENING IN JAFFNA: AN ASSESSMENT FOCUSING ON CHILDREN IN POST WAR FAMILIES**

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Though it emphasizes the importance of parents in caring for children, the roles of the family has been increasingly and largely neglected, dislocated, and transformed. Basic functions of a family are now mostly done outside families. It leads to a view of family not as a platform for harmony and happiness, but for divorce, separation, widowhood, childlessness, single parent families, abandoned children, child prostitution, sexual abuse and domestic violence, *etc.*

The aim of this study is to find avenues for the family strengthening programs (FSP) organized for the three G.N divisions chosen from the Divisional Secretariat (DSJ), Jaffna. A FSP promotes family involvement in children's development. This is a preventive measure towards and also (re)confirms the value of family as the best place for a child to grow up with love and security. The field sites are situated in Kurunagar which lies in the coastal belt of Jaffna. Data collection was carried out through household surveys, observations, dialogues with stakeholders, and Community Based Organizations (CBOs). Written material obtained from SOS and stakeholders was also used in the data base, along with professional literature.

Children living with only the mother are a frequent phenomenon in these areas. And also the number of children living with someone other than the parents is quiet high. In fact, the number of children living with both parents is less than 10%. This, along with lack of care and affection, is one of the major factors leading to child abuses. Separation is very frequent in families. Parents do not pay sufficient attention to education. Houses are parents' main-focus. Children are taught to value money more than education, and too much exposure to television and mobile phones has a negative impact on children. Further, they imitate their parents and elder brothers and drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes from a very young age. Moreover, child abuse, child labour, drop outs, absenteeism, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and alcoholism are highly prevalent in this area.

It has been revealed through a data analysis and findings that FSP is very needed in this area with an involvement of a multi-institutional partnership, especially in the areas of education, attitudinal change and infrastructural development. Establishing meaningful linkages with already existing structures in the region may help to achieve long term viability in some ways. There is also a need to build new structures likes Family Groups, Alcohol Group Service, Street groups, monitored via multi-agency supervision etc. A formalized network of all stakeholders working together may offer leverage for actualizing FSP in that region. It also recommends some intervention programme in order to strengthen families, understanding their needs and vulnerabilities.

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