



Powered by *arpan*
Towards Freedom From
Child Sexual Abuse

Impact Report 2023



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Why Child Safety Week?

At Arpan, it is our mission to prevent Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and heal those affected by it. However, CSA still remains an issue that impacts millions of children worldwide.

According to a study conducted by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, in 2007, 1 in 2 children in India experiences some form of CSA. Also, the National Crime Records Bureau reported a staggering 68,266 cases of sexual crimes against children being registered in 2022 (NCRB 2022). This data which shows a 10% increase in reporting of cases of sexual crimes against children as compared to 2021, brings to light the cultural taboo around the issue. If not healed, CSA can have a serious, long-term impact on the well-being and overall development of the child.

To achieve cultural and systemic transformation and empower stakeholders to work towards the cause, Arpan initiated the 'Child Safety Week' campaign in 2019 as a collaborative movement to raise awareness, initiate conversations and encourage collective action on the issue of CSA. A week in November, 14th to 20th is dedicated to highlighting the importance of child safety through conversations and events.

Why the week of 14th – 20th November?

- **14th November** - Children's Day in India
- **18th November** - World Day for Prevention, Healing and Justice to End Childhood Sexual Violence
- **19th November** - World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse
- **20th November** - International Children's Day

This year the objective of Child Safety Week was to help adults understand that 'It's Okay for children To Say No' in unsafe situations and to challenge the cultural norm of saying 'Yes', thus ensuring the safety of children.

Executive Summary

Arpan, dedicated to combating child sexual abuse (CSA), underscores the urgent need for action during Child Safety Week. Despite efforts, CSA remains a pervasive issue, often hindered by cultural taboos.

To address this, Arpan spearheaded the fifth edition of Child Safety Week in November 2023, with the theme, 'It's Okay to Say No', which challenges societal norms that often silence children. Emphasizing the importance of assertive refusal skills, the campaign seeks to empower both children and adults to prioritize safety and respect boundaries. It also aimed at saying 'Yes' to children's well-being and safety by accepting that it's okay for children to say No.

Through a multi-faceted approach, Arpan engaged in various activities during Child Safety Week. These included a robust social media campaign, celebrity endorsements, and partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Notably, initiatives such as branding BEST buses in Mumbai with child safety messages garnered substantial reach, both online and offline.

Through these efforts, we had a reach¹ of over 7 million!

We cordially thank each and every partner for their enthusiastic and positive support in taking this movement forward. We count on your continued support beyond Child Safety Week to walk the journey towards 'A world free of Child Sexual Abuse'.

Best Wishes,

Team – Child Safety Week 2023

The Impact looks like:

Activities	Reach
Offline and Online activities	13,21,562
Media Coverage	60,55,600
Digital Reach	174
Total Reach	73,77,336

¹ Reach: It is a metric used to quantify the potential audience size or the number of individuals exposed to a particular campaign or message.

THEME: 'IT'S OKAY TO SAY NO'

We live in a world where saying 'Yes' is the cultural norm and saying 'No' equates to being disrespectful, disobedient, rude and selfish. This prevailing culture makes it difficult for many of us to say 'No', teach our children to say 'No' and accept a 'No' from others. Our children are conditioned to obey everyone, especially adults, unquestionably even if they are uncomfortable and unsafe. It is imperative that we say 'Yes' to children's well-being and safety by accepting that 'It is okay to say 'No'.



Through this theme, we tried to help adults...

1. Understand that to be safe, children need skills to communicate their personal boundaries and refuse assertively.
2. Teach children to say 'No' assertively when they feel uncomfortable, unsafe, pressured or when someone crosses their personal boundaries.
3. Accept that it is okay for children to say 'No' in matters concerning their well-being and safety without adults feeling threatened and respect children's feelings without equating their 'No' with disobedience or disrespect.
4. Stop negative reinforcement by punishing children when they say 'No'.
5. Understand that it is not a child's fault if they cannot say 'No' or refuse in an unsafe situation.

The Campaign Video:

Like every year, this Child Safety Week, we created a unique campaign video around the story of an adolescent, Shraddha, who faces an unsafe situation. Through this video, we aimed to spread the message that 'It Is Okay to Say No' to unsafe behaviours, and it is important for adults to accept the same.

CAN CHILDREN EVER SAY 'NO'?

Collaborative Efforts:

1. Public Transportation Initiative: A Lifeline for Child Safety

We initiated the collaboration with BEST, Mumbai's lifeline and government-aided bus transport system to educate bus drivers and conductors on the issue of Child Safety. Child Safety Week was the best time to launch this year long initiative on creating safe public transport for children. At the launch event, we had Kumari Aditi Varda Sunil Tatkare, Minister of Women and Child Development Maharashtra and Mr Vijay Singhal, General Manager BEST join the campaign with their powerful messages on the issue of CSA.



We branded 10 buses across Mumbai with messages on child safety and Child Safety Week on the outside. Along with this, around 1200 buses carried posters on child safety messages meant to educate adults and create awareness on the issue. Similar posters were displayed in 27 bus depots across Mumbai.



Many people across the city identified these posters and communicated the safety messages to the children around them. Here's an anecdote from one such child.

A child was referred for counselling after the PSE programme. While the Arpan counsellor was introducing Arpan, the child stopped her. When asked why the child stopped her, they responded that they were already aware of Arpan. While travelling by one of the BEST buses, their mother had noticed Arpan's posters and taught the child about personal safety using the messages on the poster and accessing the QR code given there.

This incident brought to light the need for such campaigns which helps us reach out to adults at scale and make resources on child safety easily available. Through these resources, adults can teach children to identify safe and unsafe situations, say 'No' and seek help.

2. Empowering Voices: Faith Foundation's Impactful Campaign

A standout social media campaign during Child Safety Week, marked by hashtags #ItsOkayToSayNo #ChildSafetyWeek #Arpan, was spearheaded by Faith Foundation, Shillong. This remarkable non-profit organization is dedicated to the holistic well-being of children in Shillong, focussing on education, healthcare, and overall support. Their impactful posts included influential videos addressing the critical issue of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), engaging games for parents to educate children on personal safety, visuals of bike rallies, vibrant wall paintings, and compelling street plays that brought to light the issue of CSA and shared personal safety messages.



3. Celebrity Advocacy: Amplifying CSA Awareness

The first to kick off the campaign was our solid supporter and goodwill ambassador, Vidya Balan. Along with her, we had voices like that of Tara Alisha Berry, Nirmal Soni, Mrunal Shetty, Shweta Kawaatra and Pujya Bhaishri Rameshbhai Oza join us this year. Our donors, school and government partners joined us, too, by sharing their voices and talking about the need to bring in a cultural shift.



All of them emphasised the need to teach children to say 'No' assertively and for adults to accept that it is okay for children to say 'No' in matters concerning their well-being and safety. These videos, carrying the theme of Child Safety Week and its importance spread far and wide.

4. Statewide Collaborations: Strengthening Child Safety Initiatives

The states of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Goa, Assam and Andhra Pradesh came forward to join us for Child Safety Week. They all undertook various activities to promote child safety. These activities included poetry writing competitions, poster-making competitions, street plays or role-plays, wall painting and many more.

The Goa State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (GSPCR) endorsed Child Safety Week, where they addressed



the issue of CSA along with Arpan and conducted various activities across the state. Educational institutions, corporates, leaders of various organizations, including elected leaders of state government as well as local bodies, faith leaders, social influencers in the state of Goa came together to observe Child Safety Week 2023, from 14th November – 20th November 2023.

GSPCR's call to the state was published in the newspaper 'The Goan' which helped amplify the conversations around the issue to a large extent. Thus, through these initiatives and collaborations, we aimed to inspire and encourage adult stakeholders to understand that 'It's okay to Say No', break the culture of saying 'Yes', protect children and teach them assertive refusal skills when they feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Conclusion

Despite the progress made during Child Safety Week, the fight against CSA is ongoing. Arpan calls for sustained efforts beyond the campaign, urging individuals and organizations to continue advocating for child safety and break those cultural norms which reinforce CSA. By fostering a culture where children are empowered to identify unsafe behaviours, refuse assertively and seek help, we can work towards a future where every child grows up free from sexual abuse. The campaign may have ended, but our commitment to protecting children must endure.

Together, let us strive to transform the dream of a safe world for children into reality. We look forward to your continued support.





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"Dear Adults,
Take a stand and
lend a hand to keep
us Safe and Protected"

#ItsOkToSayNO
#ChildSafetyWeek

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