

Balvihar (Children) Programme

“Children are not empty vessels to be filled but lamps to be lit.”- Swami Chimayananda

If we have to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children. We all hope that as children grow up, they will develop a clear understanding of the difference between 'right' and 'wrong'. There is good evidence that children's pro-social behavior (e.g., sharing, helping, caring) can be increased by observing role models who show such behaviors themselves; that the way they think about moral situations is also influenced by social factors.



CORD's Balvihar programme accommodates children between the ages of 6 and 14, a crucial time of their development. Research has made it clear that in addition to young children's growing reasoning skills, their experiences within their family and their peers can help them gain insights into the important distinction between moral rules (e.g., not hitting others) and social conventions (e.g., table manners).

CORD Sidhbari was running Balvihar programmes & 20 Balwadis (Pre-nursery school for children of age group 2-6 years) in district Kangra even prior to government's ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) programme. Now Balwadis are closed as government's ICDS programme has opened Anganwadis in all village/ wards of the Panchayats. Currently CORD Sidhbari's Balvihar programme



has 147 Balvihar groups with 3000 children as members actively participating in the villages. Other sites in Orissa CORD Deuldhia has seven (7) Balwadis, CORD Lathikatta has nurtured four Balvihar groups besides running school. In Tamilnadu, CORD Tamraipakkam is running Chinmaya Tuition centre and Balvihar for village children through CORD staff and volunteers to benefit village children & CORD Siruvani is working with 11 Balvihar groups in their area of operation where 60-80 children are

attending regular sessions of Balvihar on Sundays. CORD Vijaya Andhra Pradesh, started recently with an orphanage.

Objective:

To give children access to a nurturing environment for holistic growth.



Balvihar programme of CORD is a comprehensive programme. It covers the integrated development of the child, Indian culture, Patriotism and a universal outlook. It makes a significant breakthrough in the Character moulding and personality development of growing children. Value education is the fine art of moulding the consciousness of children

towards nobler and finer living. Value education encompasses the traditional values of moral science and much more. Any quality that a society needs becomes a “value” for it. Hence value education includes not only universal values such as truth, love, courage and faith but also socially relevant values such as self- reliance, civic consciousness, environmental awareness, Patriotism and tolerance.

While regular academic education is “information” aimed at economic self reliance, value education aims at “transformation” aimed at emotional self-reliance.

Basic curriculum of CORD’s Balvihar programme:

- Enhancing children’s ability to participate in and benefit from their social environment.
- Children learn basic skills like greeting people, cleanliness, learning to eat in a disciplined manner – after washing one’s hands, nails cut and the right hand and mouth coordination.
- The importance of festivals and their celebrations.
- Activities cultivating devotion like reciting Bhajans and Strotram.
- The importance of rituals and discipline.
- Exercise, games, value education through songs / skits/ games.
- Sanitation and Socio- economic audit on alcohol.
- General Knowledge competition.
- Health related knowledge like the causes and preventive measures for diarrhea and management of dehydration at home.
- Stimulating the five senses – seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling.



‘Cool camp’ for children at Tamraipakkam

for diarrhea and management of

- Breaking their shyness and gaining confidence.
- Poems and games.

The **Bal Sena** (Children Army) is an important part of CORD's Balvihar program. It offers children a platform where they are treated as equals and are allowed to express their opinions, views, and experiences. In addition, Bal Sena groups facilitate discussions about a variety of topics. For spiritual growth they are taught the Guru Stotram and chanting of the shlokas of Ramayana and Mahabharata, to set an example for a simple and meaningful life. The programme discusses healthy eating and living habits for a healthy life with the personalities of great leaders as positive examples. The programme acquaints them about the way society functions, and how they can contribute to improve their society. In addition discussions on various topics relating to mental growth, personality growth, and the dangers of alcohol, sanitation, personal hygiene, and leadership development are carried out periodically.

Balvihar activities at the centre:

- Bal Vihar training and key orientation programmes for the village volunteer resource persons to upgrade their skills.
- Training on all linkage programmes and up-gradation.
- Bal Vihar programmes reporting on monthly basis and re-designing to modify and improve programmes is an ongoing process based on people's participation.
- Intra- departmental and lateral meetings to converge and reinforce programme linkage for village development.



Balvihar activities at the field:

- Field surveys to identify children of 6-14 years of age. Advising mothers, as per their setting, on health and on community based livelihood, plantation etc during home visits by the resource persons.
- To train village volunteer resource persons and community based organizations for Running Balvihar once a month in their own respective Panchayats covering each ward with a target.
- Providing child – care in the villages. Regular health checks including weight, height, HB, to make them understand of the prevention of varying communicable, infectious and other diseases.
- Holding mothers meeting for counseling on child care.
- Performing plays and puppet



Balvihar camp at Lathikatta

shows for transmission of messages on various social issues.

- Linking of all the programmes with the Mahila Mandals.

VVRP:

Identification and training of Village Volunteer Resource Persons (VVRP) in Panchayats covering majority of the wards who will teach the children on various issues which includes celebrating Independence Day, Republic Day and festivals. They are made aware of the important days, sanitation in streets, local water resources, periodical cultural programmes like dance, song, drama, and other co-curricular activities like games in their own respective Panchayats.



This way a sensitive society is built on a strong concrete foundation based on values and ethics imbibed in the character at a young age.

The children associated with our programme grow up to be healthier and more confident with better performance in schools.