

Children's rights and text in rural Punjab, India

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Problematic

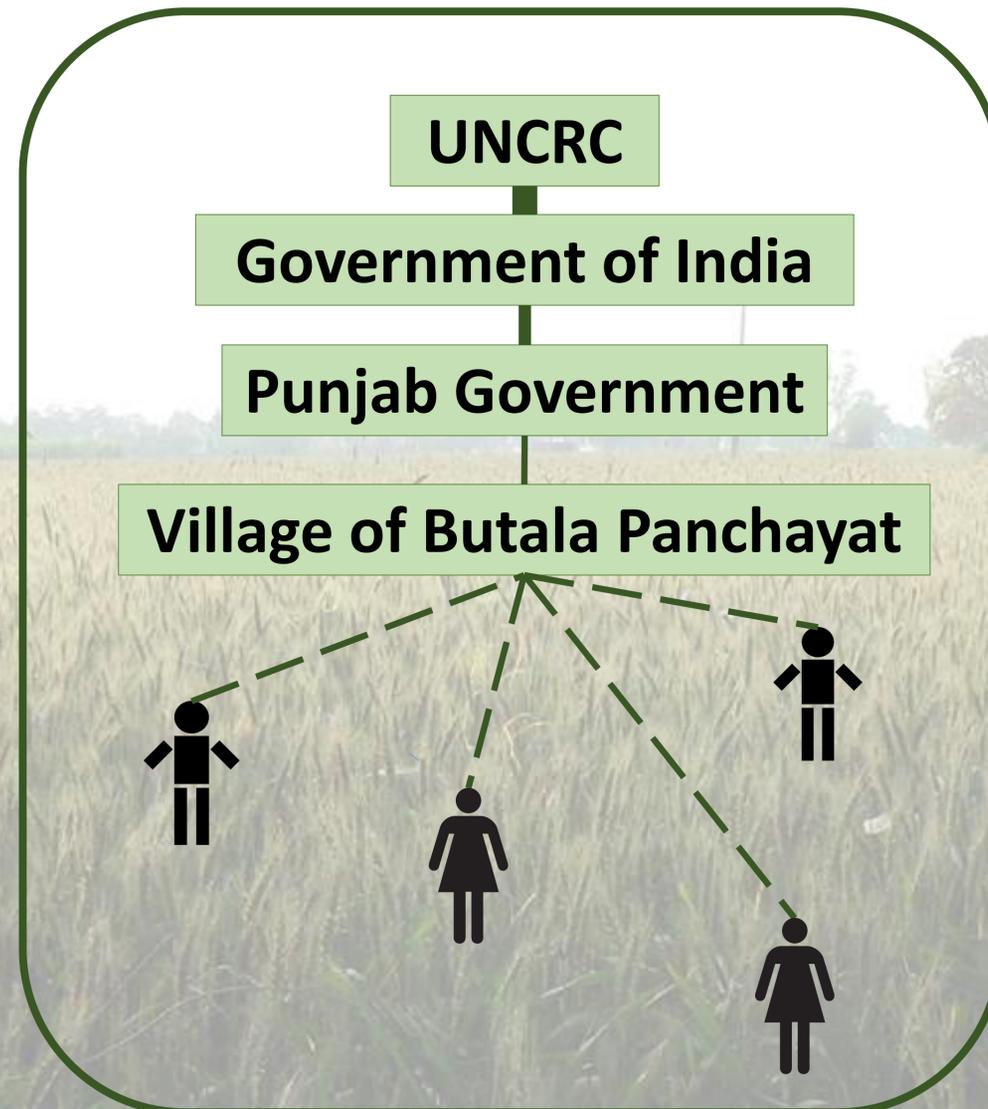
The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child is a text based document that assumes all writing is textually mediated. It cannot be successful in environments that are not mediated by text like the village of Butala in Rural Punjab.

Methodology

The researcher spent six months in the village of Butala conducting ethnographic fieldwork and collecting policy documents regarding the UNCRC in government regulated *anganwadi* centers (preschools).

Text in Butala:

Butala is a village in rural Punjab in northern India. The village is predominately rooted in farming and has very low literacy levels. The *anganwadi* centers do not have printers, photocopiers, curriculum or policy documents. Life is not influenced by text-based policies, conventions and protocols.



Dissemination of UNCRC:

As the document moves through varying levels of government and various officials it becomes diluted and loses influence. Those individuals close to the top are heavily immersed in textual-realities. As the document moves down the hierarchy, technologies related to writing and the value of writing diminishes. At the level of the rural village child it has all but disappeared.

Access and intersectionality:

Children from different social positions have varied access to textually mediated spaces. Gender, caste, and class influence how likely a child is to be in a space controlled by text. For example a rich, male, child is more likely to be able to afford private school where curriculum, policy, and adherence to textual norms is strong. The most disenfranchised are the poor, lower caste, female children. They end up in publically funded spaces where writing cannot alter their reality. Thus, those who need the CRC the most, are the least likely to be affected by it.