For 'Life' is choice,
We are all painters
In our own way,
All needing to create
Something of worth,
Of lasting beauty,
Marking our journey....

John McLeod
The Journey began one spring afternoon when, on the 31st of March 2004, the “South Asia Coordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women in South Asia” was formed to follow-up on and work towards the Mid-Term review of the Yokohama Global Commitment on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

Represented by regional agencies/organizations like UNICEF ROSA, ECPAT, International Save the Children Alliance, UNIFEM (Now UN Women), UNFPA, ILO, UNDP, IOM, UNESCAP, USAID and International Federation of Terre des Hommes, and with the SAARC Secretariat as observer, the “South Asia Coordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women in South Asia” in its meeting on 23 July 2004, agreed to coordinate regional initiatives towards the UN Study on Violence against Children and to expand the participation by inviting WHO, UNOHCHR, PLAN International and other specialized I/NGOs working in the region.

In the same meeting, the Coordinating Group also established a Steering Committee (working group) with representatives from UNICEF, WHO, Save the Children, ILO, UNOHCHR and UNIFEM to be responsible for ensuring the preparations towards the National and Regional Consultations for the UN Study on Violence against Children. The overall objective for the Coordinating Group was to coordinate and support the South Asian countries' participation in the UN Study on Violence against Children through a three tier initiative: Regional Study, National Consultations, and South Asia Regional Consultation on Violence against Children. The Coordinating Group that has its genesis in 2004 is now known as the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG). Somewhere mid-stream, leading up to 2005, Planete Enfants joined the group as observer.

In 2005, the South Asian nations came together to review the situation of violence against children in the region at a Regional Consultation on Violence against Children, in Islamabad, Pakistan. Government representatives, children and other stakeholders contributed to the success of the consultation due to their commitment and aspirations to make a positive difference. One of the highlights of the consultation was the decisive part played by children, making their experiences of everyday violence visible to adults, another one being the early commitment of governments across the region to prohibit all forms of violence against children. The consultation laid the foundation for a regional network on violence against children that would steadily grow in significance.

Prior to the regional consultation, much ground level work had been facilitated by the SACG members in the form of building partnerships with Governments, supporting national consultations, including children’s consultations; designating themselves roles to collate information, and commission further research on Violence against Children in different settings. In the numerous Working Group meetings, SACG members agreed on and took up responsibilities in order of comparative advantages, for, what seemed like, never—ending requirements that went into ensuring a successful and meaningful regional consultation. The levels of stress borne by agency representatives in the working groups, including that of their own agency portfolios, sometimes manifested itself in, what it appears now, as “almost” justified “outbursts”. Things changed for the better as hard work, enhanced emotional intelligence and evolving trust and group accountability began to show tangible results.

Ms Chandni Joshi, the then Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM, would say very wisely, “though UNIFEM’s mandate is the Empowerment of Women and furthering their rights, we have joined this movement to combat Violence against Children so that girl children of today can have a better quality of life as women tomorrow.”
The Regional Consultation, held on 19-21 May, was hosted by the Government of Pakistan and supported by SACG. The consultation, with the tagline, “Wipe away the Tears: End violence against children”, coined by children, brought together ministers, senior government officials, SAARC Secretariat representatives and members of the civil society and representatives from INGOs, UN agencies, the UN Study Secretariat, bilateral agencies, experts, resource persons, children and young people and the media. Her Excellency Ms Zobaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education, Pakistan, graced the event as Chief Guest.

One key outcome of the 2005 Consultation was the submission of the South Asian input to the UN Study on Violence against Children, personally absorbed by Prof. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, independent expert appointed by the Secretary-General, to put together the UNVAC Study, pursuant to General-Assembly resolution 57/90 of 2002. Another one was SAF.

After long hours of serious discussions between children and participating adults from governments and other agencies in a relatively small breakaway room (one can even remember the colour of the table cloth) at the venue of the South Asia Regional Consultation on Violence against Children, the South Asia Forum for Ending Violence against Children (SAF) was born. The discussions weighed the pros and cons of proposing a regional mechanism like SAF, its usefulness and its uselessness, the added value and the “added layer” vis-à-vis the already existing SAARC mechanisms and regional arrangements established to further the wellbeing of children in the South Asia region. Children’s incessant lobbying and the very fast work done by a multi stakeholder group in drafting the Dream, thoughts, plans and structure to be tabled and endorsed by Member States allowed SAF to continue to be born that day. What also helped was the presence of some very prominent personalities from the region who put their commitment, faith, belief and clout behind the Dream.

SAF, composed of representatives from the eight governments in the region is considered one major outcome of the 2005 Regional Consultation on Violence against Children in South Asia.

The SACG received the mandate to provide technical and financial support to SAF activities and help develop thematic knowledge and strategies. While the Global Study on violence against children received almost universal response, SAF was considered as the first and only regional entity established in the world to lay the foundation for joint and coordinated steps towards ending violence against children, acting as a milestone for child rights and child protection in the region.

Pakistan was the first country that hosted the SAF Secretariat, established in January 2006, for a period of two years under the aegis of the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development, Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education of Pakistan.

Building on the outcomes of the 2005 Regional Consultation in Islamabad, the first SAF Technical Consultation and Ministerial Meeting in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, in July 2006, established the regional agenda on violence against children and began to set up the institutional mechanisms necessary for its realisation.


Regional Consultations have been held throughout the five years of the South Asian Forum. SAF representatives were brought together in four consultation meetings with the coordination and support of the SACG and the Regional Secretariat.
The consultations hosted by Pakistan (2006), India (2007), Nepal (2008), and Nepal (2010) were to consolidate work throughout the region and to bring this agenda to the forefront of government debate.

The consultations brought together national coordinators, government representatives and children from each of the 8 members states in different fora such as:

- Coordinators’ meeting
- Ministerial meeting
- Child Participation meeting

Consultations were avenues for participants to establish linkages and identify progress and gaps concerning regional mechanism and the reinforcement of the activities addressing violence against children in the region. Consultations were also platforms where crucial issues such as early marriage, child protection, child trafficking and child sexual exploitation were discussed, examined, tracked and recommendations made with regard to filling the gaps and moving forward.

SAF consultations have been relevant to children as they were provided with the opportunity to share their experiences, good practices and models of successful child and youth-led interventions and also recommend to governments on how to move ahead in tackling important issues related to violence against children.

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There are no ordinary journeys… only extraordinary travellers.

During the 3rd Ministerial Meeting in June 2010 on the recommendation of the 4th SAF Consultation, members took stock of progress and decided in collaboration with the SACG and guidance from SAARC to endorse a new Institutional Framework for Ending Violence against Children. The Forum was transformed into a new institutional structure and renamed ‘South Asia Initiative for Ending Violence against Children’ (SAIEVAC) that would operate at the regional and national level.

The recommendations from the meetings were formulated in The Kathmandu Commitment to Action for Ending Violence against Children: “The 4th South Asia Forum for Ending Violence against Children (SAF) met in Kathmandu on 21-22 January, 2010. Taking stock of progress and the opportunities presented, members of the Forum in collaboration with the SAARC Secretariat endorsed a new Institutional Framework for Ending Violence Against Children in which the Forum will transform into a permanent Regional Centre with the change in Nomenclature to ‘South Asia Initiative for Ending Violence against Children’ (SAIEVAC). SAIEVAC will be composed of representatives from the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAIEVAC activities will be decided by the Board, made up of representatives from all 8 member states and coordinated by a Permanent Secretariat hosted by the Government of Nepal. SAIEVAC will continue to strengthen its institutional linkages with the SACG mechanisms in its mission to end violence against children in South Asia”.

SAIEVAC developed future plans for collaboration with SAARC and a workplan to end violence against children.

Today SAIEVAC is an intergovernmental regional body comprising of 8 SAARC countries- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka- with the purpose to effectively implement measures to end all forms of violence against girls and boys.

SAIEVAC Technical consultations include SAIEVAC National Coordinators, relevant national, regional and international actors working on child protection, as well as technical representatives from Women and Children, Social Welfare (or equivalent) Ministries and participants from other Ministries from SAARC countries.

The consultations comprise of workshops that also bring together children and youth representatives, national and regional representatives of SACG, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, United Nations and other International Organizations, as well as other key child protection stakeholders and child rights actors from South Asia.
Having participated in the National Children’s Consultation in September 2011, I had the opportunity to understand SAIEVAC as a whole.

I found myself standing among the people working on the issues of children and through the open discussion on Child Rights I received an opportunity to understand the current situation of children in SAARC Countries. As I’m a child myself, I feel very good to be advocating on the issue of the Rights of the child.

I understand that I have a very important role in SAIEVAC. In my perspective and from my experiences I believe that SAIEVAC’s contribution towards ensuring the rights of the children in South Asia is of great value.

I received an opportunity to have a simple understanding about SAIEVAC when I first represented CWISH in the National Children’s Consultation.

I received an opportunity to have better understanding of SAIEVAC through my participation in the Regional Children’s Consultation on Care Standards and Child friendly Services. During the Consultation, various issues were discussed related to violence against children and we also received an opportunity to draft suggestions and draw conclusions. In the end, our participant friends selected me as an observer to the Governing Board of SAIEVAC.

I feel that all the processes that led to my being involved with SAIEVAC were simple and democratic and the programmes and events were extremely well organized and well managed.

"Smiles are made of Dreams"

The approach taken by SAIEVAC to hold free and fair consultations with children in order to reach consensus is highly commendable and I feel that children's views and opinions are respected and given dignity. These days it is easier for children in general to express their views and for adults to listen to children. It has also become easier to acquire information on and study the situation of children globally.

The work facilitated by SAIEVAC needs to be reflected more aggressively at the implementation levels of SAARC Governments. Since the work being done and advocated by SAIEVAC are results of the discussions in partnership with children, they contain our dreams and aspirations. This is something that people and governments who are accountable should take to heart.
Additionally the technical consultations develop recommendations for the improvement of the protection of children against violence in South Asia. These recommendations are presented to the SAIEVAC Governing Board for adoption, during its annual session, which is held following the Technical Consultation.

The First SAIEVAC Technical Consultation, followed by the 1st SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting, held in Kathmandu on 10-14 November 2010, were the first times SAIEVAC met formally.

Marta Santos Pais, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, praised SAIEVAC as the first regional arrangement specifically geared towards the protection of children from violence. The meetings were hosted by the SAIEVAC Secretariat, under the aegis of the government of Nepal, and supported by SACG.

During the Technical consultation, governments demonstrated their commitment to implement their respective Action Plans, speeding up legal reform and taking steps to prohibit all forms of violence against children in all settings, including Corporal Punishment. There was a clear understanding that unless the commitment led to clear and explicit prohibitions in domestic law, all other measures would be undermined.

The first Governing Board Meeting was attended by the Governing Board Members from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, two child representatives and the Chair of SACG. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the follow-up to the recommendations endorsed at the third SAF Ministerial Meeting and to review and approve the Terms of Reference of SAIEVAC and its five-year Workplan.

It was also felt that the establishment of an independent SAIEVAC Secretariat needed urgent attention. In addition, recommendations included that every possible action should be taken to attain SAARC Apex Body status.

The recommendations from the SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting focused on the practicalities of SAIEVAC operations, including the modalities of convening a Governing Board Meeting, the election of a rotating Chairperson and the development of annual work plans for the consideration of the board.
Violence against children is one of the worst scourges that have ever befallen the human kind. To abuse power and subject children to different humiliating and degrading treatments and situations is to contradict the very gift entrusted with human beings: the ability of rational thinking, compassion and a free will to decide on the course of personal actions.

Being part of efforts not only aiming at fighting violence against children, but fully determined to end it in its all forms, renews purpose of everybody’s existence. Being part of the movement such as SAIEVAC, uniting children, civil society, governments – everyone who has a role to play in this non-violent struggle – in one of the world’s regions with highest incidence of worst forms of child abuse and exploitation, can only further multiply that purpose and translate it into the common goal.

Segmented societies full of internal polarities and lack of mutual trust are usually breeding ground for various violent interactions, within which children fall innocent victims or collateral damage. This is why being a part of SAIEVAC brings back hope and keeps alive the vision that by uniting strengths and joining together we can mend the divided societies, step by little step, demonstrating that this vision is not just an ideal or a dream, but a workable and tangible reality.

So many steps have already been taken to build ties, invite and involve everyone who can contribute, encourage each other to learn more and scare the violence away. Fear is usually based on ignorance, it stems from dark recedes of perpetual questions as to why violence and how to put it to an end. Fear of violence is conquerable by increasing knowledge, skills and understanding its root-causes and ways and means to beat it.

This has been one of the most powerful aspects of being a part of SAIEVAC: through learning from each other, listening to children and their own perspectives and strategies on how to chase the violence away from their lives, spreading the word and increasing knowledge. And more than anything: reminding everyone it is so unnecessary to grow up with such a burden and stain, and so very much possible to set our societies free of this scourge.

It’s been a pleasure, duty and joy being part of this journey, sharing successes and addressing challenges and uniting voices from all over the world that are willing and committed to add their own contribution. Plan International has been devoted to this South Asia odyssey better known as SAF/SAIEVAC since its very early days and in many ways this external commitment also strengthened the organisation from within and made it more determined to prioritise child protection on its agenda.

And there’s so much more to be done: further strengthen efforts and commitment while promoting values of mutual respect, create more space for children and their voices, increase knowledge and excellence that will outshine the dark shadows of the violent disgrace. And finally: realising that on this joint path, despite our differences and diversities, we’re all the same and equal, human beings united in our striving to live a decent life free of violent threats and full of growth and light.

Raša Sekulovic
Plan International Asia Regional Office, SACG Co-Chair

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SAIEVAC and SACG were also recommended to reinforce institutional linkages with relevant global and regional bodies. In relation to child participation, it was suggested to hold annual national Children’s Consultations in each member state and a Regional Consultation every two years.

**Appointment of the Director General**

As a landmark progress, in December 2010, to consolidate and strengthen the work of the SAIEVAC Secretariat in relation to Member States, the SAARC processes, including the application for SAIEVAC’s SAARC Apex Body status, and partnerships with other key stakeholders, the Director General, SAIEVAC was appointed.

There is also a huge mainstreaming of children’s participation in all decisions affecting them (including in programming, advocacy, governance etc.) and personally feel to have learnt a lot being involved since several years leading some of the key elements on the participation and protection of children. I have found SAF/SAIEVAC an ideal regional platform to genuinely continue working on children’s issue in the region with greater commitment and passion.

There is a concrete platform and avenue to engage with the governments at the regional level to renew and deliver on the commitments to protect children from all forms of violence including sexual exploitation. There is a greater focus on prioritizing children’s issues (child protection) at the regional level and active and substantive participation of civil society organizations in the regional mechanism such as SAIEVAC and SAARC. The institutionalization of children’s participation in the regional mechanisms has been further strengthened and support from international community and high impact advocates such as UN Special Representative brings visibility to the work of SAIEVAC and SACG in the region.

ECPAT as the SACG Chair hosting the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III in Kathmandu, Nepal had an excellent support of the SACG members and the SAF governments despite the government of Nepal being in transition remains to be of huge memory. It makes me so happy thinking about the engagement of young people in it from across the region and eventually leading the regional children’s participation successfully to the World Congress in Rio where young people from South Asia led panel and plenary sessions.

Although there was so much difficulty in transferring the SAF Secretariat from Pakistan to Nepal, the collaborative efforts to deliver on the commitment of the SAF processes, to international and global commitments was exemplary as seen over the years.

*Bimol Bhetwal, Ecpat*
A regional children’s participation meeting, a technical consultation on care standards and child-friendly services, an NACG meeting and the second SAIEVAC Governing Board meeting were organised in Kathmandu from 25-30 September, 2011. The meetings were hosted by SAIEVAC and co-hosted by the Government of Nepal, with technical and financial support from SACG.

Children were excited to sit amidst the national delegations and present their viewpoints in the Technical Consultation. They recommended a child-friendly SAIEVAC logo and having child focal points in each country to be better informed about the activities in between SAIEVAC meetings. Four children took part in the SAIEVAC governing Board meeting – two participants and two observers.

Marta Santos Pais, the UN Special Representative on Violence against Children, sent a video message to the children saying that she believed in the strong partnership with children and young people: “Nobody knows the reality of young people better than young people themselves and your involvement is fundamental to change the world and put a stop to all forms of violence against children.”
The SAIEVAC journey was truly exciting. It was a step-by-step process that involved many actors, trials and successes – but also one where “not knowing” was a very prominent feature. We never knew what would be the direct outcomes and aggregated results, let alone the impact. We never knew what was around the next corner and how much effort each step would demand. But it became all the more exciting when the results started coming in and ended up being amazing.

Especially SAIEVAC itself, with its institutional framework of Governments driving the work to end violence against children, and children at national and regional levels feeding their views into the decision-making. It was a process truly far beyond dreams, expectations and declarations.

The most fun part was seeing the partnership evolving slowly but steadily, with trust and commitment from representatives of the Governments, civil society, children, international organisations, UN agencies and experts.

Something moves in your heart when you see all these people interact and listen to each other, and when you realise that anything is possible if somebody takes the lead and others make sense of the proposed action, support and follow-up. It touches your innermost when work is not only about work as such – but about creating friendships, real avenues for collaboration, and respect and trust. And it makes you extremely happy when it looks like real change may be possible.

I started working in South Asia in 2007, after having been engaged over many years with the UN study on Violence against Children at the global level. In 2009, Save the Children took over as Chair of the SACG but we were a bit puzzled about the way forward. SACG had been part of supporting all the important SAF and UN Study on Violence against Children follow-up events since 2005, but after the successful 2008 Regional Consultation in Kathmandu, preparing for the Rio World Congress III on Sexual Exploitation of Children, it was obvious that we had to find new ways to make sure the work and actions of the regional, international and UN-agencies remained important. The big question was how?

First, we organised a Roundtable Meeting on child protection systems. Just before the meeting, most participants called in and said they would not be able to make it. My heart sank. But amazingly, the meeting turned out to be strategically important and highly energised, with UNICEF, Terre des Hommes, UNIFEM, ECPAT, Save the Children and many more hotly debating the importance of issues versus systems thinking, systems versus need-based accommodation, and lastly the rights-based and systems approach in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We kept going until the late evening and forged out a new platform for intensified and reinforced cooperation on the basis of a systems approach, including at national level.

Next, in the beginning of 2009 Dr. Rinchen Chophel emerged on my arena, inviting us for tea and lunch.

He was pointing out the opportunities of putting a new emphasis on Governments taking the lead and aiming for regional importance through the SAARC mechanism. Quite soon we agreed it was time for all parties to work towards broadening their perceptions of each other. Governments are more than just corrupt and organisations and agencies are more than just a mafia governed by self-interest. How could
we bridge this gap in perceptions about "the other"? And what would be the practical steps? Understandably, we needed many more tea meetings, and we went on to meet up with one SAARC Director and a representative from the Nepalese Government. I remember vividly that after many of these informal meetings – sometimes not even discussing the issues – one day Rinchen came to me and said: "Turid, they trust you now". It was time to start the real work.

History tells the rest of the story of the remarkable achievements in 2010. The first meeting in January, with governments designing the institutional framework and Ministers endorsing it in June. And in November, the first SAIEVAC Technical and Governing Board Meetings. Mostly, I remember the very many meetings in the regional office of Save the Children Sweden, preparing the details with Rinchen, his Government contacts and SAARC. I also remember the many Save the Children staff members taking part in carrying out the different tasks. We didn’t really know what we were doing, and when we went to agencies "begging" for funds we didn’t really know what we were advocating for either – except the dream of regional impact. Mostly, they heard us out and generously gave the initiative a chance. But we were also clearly advised by some that regional cooperation at this high level could not be more than an illusion.

Nearly daily, and long after the honour of being the SACG Chair, I still have my hot-tempered discussions with Dr. Rinchen, who became the first Director General of SAIEVAC. We still enjoy them, though, and have agreed that they are necessary to continuously ask ourselves about the right direction, make adjustments to it and look for opportunities. The many staff members from those pioneering days, who volunteered their extra time to establish SAIEVAC, also call in now and then. They want to hear the latest and give us their point of view of the steps forward.

The issue we work on is extremely serious. We have come a long way – but we have an extra mile to go...The day when children everywhere say that they have a voice and that violence is significantly reduced is there somewhere in the future. Thus, we have the opportunity to meet them around the next corner. We should take that opportunity together.

Turid Heiberg
Chair SACG 2009 - 10
Courage is not always loud
Courage is not always proud
Courage is the quiet but steady voice inside
That keeps people going when they would rather run or hide

-Anonymous

The 2nd SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting was hosted by the SAIEVAC Secretariat under the aegis of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Government of Nepal and technically and financially supported by SACG, September 29-30th, 2011, in Kathmandu. It was attended by the Governing Board Members from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, 2 Child Representatives and 2 Child Observers, and Chair SACG.

The purpose of the 2nd Governing Board Meeting was to follow up on the progress of SAIEVAC as per the recommendations from the 1st SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting, to review and endorse the report of the Technical Workshop on Legal Reform and Corporal Punishment (as well as recommendations made by the Technical Consultation on Care Standards and Child Friendly Services.

The Director General, in his welcome address, had given a brief overview of the events of the previous week including the children’s and technical consultations. He expressed his gratitude to the H. E. Wasif Noor Muhmand, Chairperson, SAIEVAC Governing Board who has been involved with SAIEVAC since the first day and has shown unwavering commitment to its development at such a critical juncture.

Reviewing the proceeding of the 1st SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting the Director General had shared the first SAIEVAC Governing Board Meeting’s substantive recommendations for setting up institutional arrangements of the SAIEVAC Secretariat. He had shared the successes and challenges that SAIEVAC had faced in its institutionalization process and also elaborated on the institutional mechanisms that had been put into place to maintain a SAIEVAC Governing Board and ensure the participation of children, NACG and CSOs. He also shared the progress made towards creating the SAIEVAC five year workplan and highlighted the important link SAIEVAC had created at a regional and global level, in particular, with the close connection SAIEVAC had established with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.

H. E. Wasif Noor Muhmand, Chairperson, SAIEVAC Governing Board highlighted the problems faced by children in South Asia and pointed out the need to seriously address their issues. He mentioned that SAIEVAC, with a mandate of protecting children from all kinds of violence, has been making key progress in the years since its inception as SAF in 2005. He also highlighted the progress and achievements made by SAIEVAC since the 1st Governing Board Meeting.
"I am delighted at being able to participate in yet another Governing Board Meeting and to share my experiences from last year, which has provided me a core learning experience. I am excited to be given the opportunity to share with the Board all the work children from South Asia have accomplished till now with regard to violence against children and to have participated in a successful Regional Children’s Consultation where we worked together to generate recommendations and to select two new child representatives who are joining the Board this year as Observers.”

Ugyen D. Dorji, Child Representative, SAIEVAC Governing Board, Speaking to the 2nd Governing Board Meeting

H.E. Mr. Dan Bahadur Choudhari (Kurmi), Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare, Nepal was the Honourable Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony.

The Honorable Minister commended SAIEVAC on the long and satisfying journey it has made and highlighted the year 2010 as a turning point when the 3rd Ministerial Meeting took landmark decisions for the evolution of SAIEVAC. He also extended his gratitude to the Cabinet of Maldives for approving the registration and for sponsoring the application for the SAARC Apex Body status for SAIEVAC.

He re-enforced that the five year workplan had been approved by the 1st Governing Board Meeting and concluded his speech by acknowledging the presence of representatives of children, CSOs and the SACG within the Governing Board and welcomed their ability to support the efforts of the government representatives within the Board.

At this meeting, the SACG Chair, Ron Pouwels, had highlighted the importance of the partnership that governments, civil society, children and nongovernmental organizations had maintained in order to make SAIEVAC a success. He commended the ambitious approach of SAIEVAC that encourages active participation of children at the forefront of its processes. He shared his experiences of having participated in the technical consultation and stressed the importance of helping SAIEVAC to accelerate its operationalization and implementation of its five year workplan.
SAIEVAC was registered in the Maldives in 2011.

SAARC has been involved in the evolution of SAIEVAC right from the Yokohama Mid Term Review days to the Regional Consultation on Violence against Children in Islamabad in May 2005 to this day.

During the 17th SAARC Summit in Maldives in November 2011, SAIEVAC was granted the status of a SAARC Apex Body, making SAIEVAC the first ever regional organization for children to achieve this status. As a SAARC Apex Body, SAIEVAC is the recognized entity to represent the cause of children of South Asia. The Apex Body status provides SAIEVAC with the opportunity to engage with the larger framework of SAARC and to influence the plans and programmes of the SAARC Member States in the area of child rights in general and ending violence against children in particular.
SAARC has firmed up its commitment to eliminating violence against children through the SAARC Development Fund by supporting SAIEVAC to begin operationalising its five year work plan for which a SAIEVAC-SDF Strategic Planning Workshop was concluded in Bhutan in March this year.

Through the formation of SAIEVAC, governments have reemphasised their commitment to paying more attention to acts of violence against children and SAIEVAC has a number of activities lined up to help make South Asia a violence-free region for children. SAIEVAC strongly believes that children's input and involvement are valuable to making any campaign against violence against children successful and actively encourages children's participation in every area, and at every level. SAIEVAC believes that children should have national children's networks to make recommendations regularly to governments in their home countries. These networks in each country have chosen a boy and a girl to represent them regionally as Child Representatives to the SAIEVAC Governing Board.
Dear all,

I am Rashmi Vidyani Wijesinghe from Sri Lanka. I am one of the two governing board members elected in 2011. I am seventeen years old.

I have been selected to represent Sri Lanka for the SAIEVAC consultation held in Nepal in 2011. That was the first time I went abroad as a participant for a regional event. Therefore personally I had a lot of experiences through SAIEVAC which changed my life extremely different. Of course I had an unending willingness to serve for the human kind since I was small which headed me in a path that even I could not stop myself. I have joined to the children council in our area when I was ten years old which was driven by probation and child care services department of Sri Lanka. I could meet the children of various psychosocial conditions. Even without my knowledge I began to listen to them as a friend and to give them our maximum support organizing as a children group. Then I met the adults who are dedicated to solve the children’s problems ex; CRPOs, commissioner of PCCSD, NGO’s, INGO’s when I was selected as a national child representative. I worked with the CRPO of our division to identify the problems of the children of our area which is noted as the district of having highest number of reported child abuse cases in Sri Lanka. And also I tried my best to maintain continuous communication with the SAIEVAC secretariat. The probation and child care services department had organized a special occasion to evaluate my carrier with the initiative of the minister of the ministry of women affairs and child development on April 2012.

I felt I was growing with these engagements as a small but strong plant wishing to be a giant tree in the near future.

Thanks SAIEVAC for changing my destiny to be a voice for the unspoken and suffered children and for rendering an untiring service to end violence against children.

Of course SAIEVAC is an organization growing day by day. Therefore I like to add my suggestions to strengthen it as follows.

1. I would like if we select an extremely specified area for each year for the consultation as it is much realistic to implement and work as a group with a single intention as we are a group having a huge social range and different social responsibilities.

2. I would like if we pay our attention to raise the awareness of the community about SAIEVAC and its carrier.

3. Let’s have more close communication as a team throughout the year.

4. Let’s always help each other as the members of the same team to reach our goal.

5. I would like if we have a strong arrangement for the upcoming governing board members and the present GB members to give their highest contribution in the future.

I have a dream to see a world having no violence. And I wish every morning to be a member of it. But I know still I am not. But I don’t want to give up because I am a dignified member of a dedicated team working to make my dream a true. No matter how much time it gets, how much we will happen to devote our selves let’s keep it on, on behalf of the crying children with no help.

RASHMI
“SAIEVAC” a beautiful sounding acronym with two syllables- SAIE-VAC. However, when we unpack the acronym, we realise the grim reality that Violence against Children exists but feel hopeful that one day together we will be able to bring an end to it”.

His Excellency, Thakur S Powdyel, Honorable Minister of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan and Chair, NCWC in his address to the SAIEVAC-SDF Strategic Planning Workshop, Paro, Bhutan, March 2012.

Counting Colors: SAIEVAC arrives in Colombo

SAIEVAC is organising the Follow Up Regional Consultation on Violence against Children, in collaboration with SACG in Colombo, May 26-30, to review progress towards implementing the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia. The Consultation, hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka, aims to strengthen the measures and processes aimed at the effective realisation of the recommendations of 2005.

In addition to government representatives, civil society, children and regional organisations and agencies, the consultation is welcoming representatives from SAARC, including SAARCLAW and SAARC Development Fund, the UNSRSG on Violence against Children and other regional entities, as well as international experts.

Some of the participants in Colombo in 2012 would have been in Islamabad in 2005 as well. This includes one child participant from the 2005 Consultation, Tenzin Rabgye, who has now grown into a strapping young man... still advocating against Violence against Children.
How being engaged with the process from 2005 to this day has impacted you as a person?

In 2005 I had the honour and privilege of leading the Bhutanese delegation to the Regional Consultation in my capacity as the Executive Director of the very young National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC). The National Consultation on Violence against Children in Bhutan, which preceded the three days’ Regional Consultation in a way, transformed my life. I came to Islamabad as a professional health worker and left Islamabad a converted child rights advocate. My life was never the same again. And today through direct and indirect involvement…and unrelenting efforts and support of many key actors along the way…and with a favourable destiny, I have the distinct honour of leading the SAIEVAC movement as its first Director General. This indeed is quite an impact!

What have been the positive changes in the way Governments have begun to focus on children, their Rights and their protection?

To start with Bhutan, in 2005 the 2 days’ National Consultation on Violence against Children covered by the National Television created quite a stir in a society that traditionally believed in the central position of children in our existence. Today Bhutan has a fully autonomous National Commission for Women and Children with up-to-date reporting obligations and 2 dedicated Acts for children to be proud of. What can be a more powerful change or journey in the right direction? I had the privilege of being a small part of that journey and I believe the SAF/SAIEVAC movement had quite an influence on that.

In other Member States as well, the developments pertaining to children are significant in the last few years and we have the evidence from the different consultation SAIEVAC has hosted in the past.

Even more dramatically positive is the steady acceptance and space provided by the Governments for CSOs and Children as equal partners in their increasing commitment and efforts to create a better world for children. Nothing can be more encouraging and path-breaking than fact that the SAARC Regional Taskforce on Trafficking and Child Welfare now brings CSOs as part of the national delegations. Even more exciting is the reality that the SAF/SAIEVAC Governing Board has nearly equal presence of CSOs and Children on the Board as equal members. What more evidence do we need?

One incident you can remember very fondly—something that makes you happy something that makes you smile.

The journey since 2005 till Colombo 2012 is filled with countless anecdotes and incidents that have left deep impressions on my life and my soul. If I had a number of occasions to rejoice or celebrate I had even more occasions when I experienced total futility. But one miracle, which kept the SAF/SAIEVAC movement from derailing, was the fact that many of my ‘crazy’ colleagues from 2005 … government officials, CSOs and the SACG…continued to appear on the scene at the right time to resuscitate the mission.

There are just too many memories to recount.
SAIEVAC is still evolving.

From SAF to SAIEVAC there have been many changes along the way.

From 2004 to now, Violence against Children has gone through several dimensional changes; new and emerging trends keep shifting the SACG/SAIEVAC goal posts. Just as the issue has grown in parameters, so have the efforts to eliminate it increased. While some co-travellers have left in mid-stream for pressing agency reasons, others have joined the SACG/SAIEVAC movement.

What has not changed, however, is the personal commitment of those who have been involved in the process. What has not changed is the way they have navigated beautifully within the confines of their organisational mandates, logframes and priorities to champion the causes of children, especially in combating Violence against Children. And, what has grown over the years is the political will of Governments in the region to build positive partnerships against Violence against Children.

The Journey has been tough. The journey has been sweet. **SAIEVAC has found its Muse in the Dreams of the children of SAARC.**
These few verses from Tennyson’s “The Brook” perhaps encapsulate what has been and what will be:

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
Among my skimming swallows;  
I make the netted sunbeam dance  
Against my sandy shallows:

I murmur under moon and stars  
In brambly wildnesses;  
I linger by my shingly bars;  
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on forever.

The SAIEVAC movement is here to stay. The commitment is written in stone.
SAIEVAC
SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

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