



## **SOUTH ASIA INITIATIVE TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

**"Solidarity for the Children of SAARC"**

**-draft-**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **SAIEVAC Expert Advisory Group on CSAE & OS**

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#### **Background:**

SAIEVAC Expert Panel on Child Participation (SEPCP) provides a forum for the collaborative exchange of information, ideas and opinions, between external experts and within SAIEVAC, SACG and other relevant organizations/networks specifically on child participation. The SEPCP will, in the process support the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat (SRS) in providing technical expertise and sharing of information tailored to SAIEVAC institutional mechanisms on child participation. The SEPCP's role is advisory to the SRS and will also continue to provide active support on child participation component of the regional children's consultation and other events organized by SAIEVAC including others to which SAIEVAC has been asked to provide technical support on the participation of children.

#### **Objectives:**

- To strengthen and institutionalize child participation within the SAIEVAC mechanisms at national and regional levels through promotion of meaningful and ethical child participation within the SAIEVAC structures
- To explore and ensure active engagement of Child Representatives and Observers to the SAIEVAC GB in particular and children from South Asia in general to contribute to the implementation of the SAIEVAC Five Year work plan and other areas where children can actively and meaningfully contribute to strengthen and institutionalize child participation in line with the SAIEVAC's mandate
- To exchange knowledge and provide technical support and expertise on child participation to SAIEVAC Secretariat and its national chapters working on ending violence against children in South Asia.
- To encourage, promote and advocate in supporting children's participation at regional, national and local levels in close collaboration with the government agencies, civil society organizations and community based organizations including other networks
- To exchange knowledge and collaborate with other global forums, regional and national networks and coalitions and local and community levels mechanisms on child participation to promote a rights-based and coordinated approach to the strengthening of national child protection systems, including community-based child protection mechanisms in the fight against violence against children.

#### **Strategies:**

- Supporting SAIEVAC through providing of expertise on child participation and necessary technical assistance with organizing and hosting of national and regional children's consultations and workshops
- Supporting SAIEVAC in ensuring participation of children at different levels with the implementation of the SAIEVAC Five Year workplan and other project activities.



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- Supporting SAIEVAC with the capacity building of Child Representatives and Observers to the GB as well as of other young activists from the region who are actively engaged to end violence against children
- Supporting SAIEVAC with developing and strengthening monitoring and evaluation mechanisms on child participation at national and regional levels and to assess the status on violence against children at the country and regional levels.

### **Composition of the SEPCP and its members:**

The SEPCP shall be composed of 5-6 members who are having extensive experiences and expertise on child participation and have been involved in promoting or executing child participation events and children consultations in the region with good understanding on violence against children and other children's issues in general and children's rights to protection and participation in particular.

The membership will be drawn from the agencies that were identified from the SACG agencies that will bring on board an appropriate blend of expertise, knowledge and working experience on meaningful and ethical child participation.

### **Duration:**

The duration of the SAIEVAC Expert Panel will be of two years

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### ***Working methods and structures:***

Members of the SEPCP will be responsible to the SRS to offer their independent and active support including objective advice pertaining to the issues of child participation and how this will be strongly institutionalize within the SAIEVAC framework.

### **Frequency of meetings and participation at other meetings and events:**

In carrying out its terms of reference, the SEPCP shall hold meetings at least four times in a year (one per quarter) and as needed per year and within the limits of available budgetary appropriations and in order to expedite the progress of its work, ensure participation of children and young people in aspects of its work which concern them through specific consultations, including by electronic means.

Additional meetings may be held if the SEPCP so feels or at the request of the SRS. These or any additional meetings may be undertaken using in-person, web-based or other communication and online technologies as and when necessary.

### **Meeting Records:**

Records of the meeting and decisions including issue summaries are prepared by the group following each meeting and verified for completeness and accuracy by the SAIEVAC DG. Once approved by all members and the SAIEVAC DG, the records-of-decisions and other



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information including plans of action will then be tabled at the SAIEVAC GB Meeting for endorsement.

### **Other responsibilities include:**

- Available and prepared to participate in meetings of the group on child participation in addition to the planned schedules, national or regional level consultations and workshops organized by SAIEVAC specifically supporting on child participation including providing other agreed support and being available and prepared to attend other relevant and useful meetings that are held in line with the SAIEVAC's mandate and organized by the government line agencies and external organizations or agencies.
- Overseeing and chairing meetings;
- Documenting reports and procedures of the meeting, consulting with the SAIEVAC DG prior to attending any other meetings or workshops/consultations subject to particular requests from any other organizations and agencies that are relevant on the agenda of child participation and providing expertise and information being accountable to SAIEVAC's mandate and protocol/policy. In this situation, the group member who attended such meetings and consultations/workshops will have to reports back to the core group that includes the SAIEVAC DG.

Throughout the scope of the roles and in fulfilling the responsibilities, each member will have to maintain confidentiality and high ethical standards following the mandate of SAIEVAC and other HR policies.

### **Meeting Agenda:**

The Group members will draft the agendas and share with the SAIEVAC DG at least 3 to 4 weeks in advance of regularly scheduled meetings. The agenda is then endorsed by the DG, in consultation with the group members. The agenda, along with supporting meeting materials, are provided to the group members by the SAIEVAC Secretariat on a regular basis.

### **Process of resignation:**

Any group member, who will be unable to continue to be on the Group, will have to provide 14 days' notice of their intent to resign. The resignation notice must be in writing and be addressed to the SAIEVAC DG. The letter should state the effective date of resignation.

### **Review of the Terms of Reference:**

The SAIEVAC DG and the SEPCP will review the group's mandate, activities, terms of reference and relevance each year to ensure that it continues to meet ongoing needs and in strengthening to institutionalize child participation within the SAIEVAC mechanism. Recommendations for improvement will be considered on an ongoing basis following such review.



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### ANNEX

*"[Participation can be defined as]... the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built, and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship".*

(Hart, 2002, p.5)

### **Children's Participation is a Human Right**

**Article 12 and 13 of CRC** gives us an idea what participation means: (Article 12.1) State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

(Article 13.1) The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. Every young person has the right to think for him or herself. They are entitled to form their own ideas or opinions about issues or problems that affect them. They are also entitled to know and have a say about the solutions to these problems. They also have the right to be protected from harm whenever they express their opinions or take action to promote and protect their human rights. Adults on the other hand have the responsibility to recognize and respect the rights of children to participate. This means that adults should listen to them, take their thoughts seriously, support them whenever they want to take action and ensure their protection and safety along the way.

### **Children can participate in different ways**

In the publication, "Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making," by UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, meaningful approaches in children's participation were grouped in 3 categories:

- 1. Consultative processes** – This is a common approach where adults initiate and manage the processes to gather inputs from children which may be used to improve and develop policies and programs. Consultative processes can also provide opportunities for children to be co-organizers.
- 2. Participative processes** – This approach means greater collaboration with children. While it is still initiated by adults, this allows for greater involvement of young people in the early stages of planning up to the management of the projects.
- 3. Promoting self-advocacy** – This approach aims "to empower children to identify and fulfill their own goals and initiatives. It is a process where children themselves take action to address those issues that they see as important." The role of the adult here is to support or to facilitate and not to lead.



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### **Meaningful participation is good for children and society**

Gerison Lansdown, in a publication commissioned by UNICEF Innocenti Research Center in 200119, clarifies that:

*“Article 12 is a substantive right, saying that children are entitled to be actors in their own lives and to participate in the decisions that affect them. But, as with adults, democratic participation is not an end in itself. It is the means through which to achieve justice, influence outcomes and expose abuses of power. In other words, it is also a procedural right enabling children to challenge abuses or neglect of their rights and take action to promote and protect those rights. It enables children to contribute to respect for their best interest.”* Whenever children are given the opportunity to speak out, adults are informed about the needs, aspirations and concerns of children. These can guide both adults and children in coming up with ways to address their situation. Furthermore, duty-bearers are reminded that there are obligations to children that they have to fulfill.

### **Participation should be fun and safe for children!**

A set of minimum standards for consulting with children should be followed as guide when events or activities are conducted for and with children. These standards should be in place before planning activities and should be followed by everyone participating.

- I. An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability: Adults should have children’s best interest at heart and it should always be the primary consideration. Transparency means that everyone involved including children should be aware of how things are progressing. Honesty facilitates trust in the relationship between adult and children. Any important information that will equip the child to make good decisions regarding his or her participation should be given. There should be measures and processes in place to check if everything was done according to plans and existing policies.
- II. A children friendly environment: In order for children to be comfortable participating in activities, the place should feel safe and the over-all atmosphere should be friendly. Even the process of participation should be developed in a way that is accessible and easy to follow considering the capacity of the child. Children should be aware of possible dangers that may happen to them, e.g. when talking to adult strangers or going out of the venue of the activity. They should also be aware about the persons or groups they can approach to and report untoward incidents that may happen.
- III. Equality of opportunity: Every child should be given the chance or the option to participate regardless of physical capacity, gender, ethnicity, economic capacity or other status. In some cases, adjustments to the design of an activity or provision of additional support should take place in order to allow everyone to join. It is also important that the design of activities or projects do not reinforce discrimination and violence between and among children.
- IV. Participation promotes the safety and protection of children: Every endeavor where children are involved is a potential contribution to make their world a better place to



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live in. They are encouraged to share their views and experiences in the hope that there will be prompt and appropriate action from adults and authorities. As part of ensuring a child-friendly environment, all efforts must be made to ensure the safety of the child wherever he or she is engaged. Measures to prevent them from being exposed to harm or abuse should be made.

- V. Ensure the commitment and competency of adults involved in the process: Whatever role adults play in an activity that involves children would require them to be patient, skillful and sensitive to the needs of the child in order for him or her to have the optimum participation experience. The adult can be the partner, the mentor, the protector and the role model of the child in his or her quest to be involved