

Increased Accountability of ASEAN and SAARC to the Realisation of Children's Right to Protection

Preparatory Regional Children Assembly
On
The SAARC Regional Strategy on Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

Organized by GD Pakistan on behalf of NACG Pakistan,
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Hosted by the Federal Ministry of Human Rights,
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in collaboration with SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat

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Preparatory Regional Children Assembly on the SAARC Regional Strategy on Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Project:

Given the central role that CSO actors play in advocating for children's rights, Plan Asia Regional Office (ARO) has been cooperating closely with national level child rights based CSO coalitions in order to support joint advocacy efforts, particularly around monitoring and periodic alternative reporting under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) framework. To this end, Plan ARO organised a number of capacity building trainings as part of a four-year regional programme that aimed to strengthen civil society engagement in monitoring children's rights implementation in Asia.

In 2015, the focus of this regional initiative was shifted towards advocacy by regional CSO coalitions towards ASEAN and SAARC for increased accountability to the realization of children's right to protection. The Project is implemented with the financial support received from NORAD, SIDA and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Framework Agreement of Finland. The Project transpires at the regional level and is jointly implemented by Plan Asia Regional Office (ARO), Child Right Coalition Asia (CRC Asia) and National Action and Coordination Group against Violence against Children (NACGs), two regional civil society coalitions operating respectively in ASEAN and SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation) sub regions.

In order to further increase the effectiveness of their advocacy efforts, CSO partners to the Project, namely CRC Asia and NACGs have identified the need for developing their existing capacities and skills related to advocacy for child rights, with a specific focus on CSAE (Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation) and child participation. Group Development Pakistan (GD Pakistan) on behalf of NACG Pakistan has been entrusted with the regional implementation of this CSO project at SAARC level.

1.2 SAIEVAC and CSO Project collaboration:

In July 2015, an agreement was laid out among NACGs and SRS regarding the CSO project operationalisation and in December 2015, a workshop was conducted to design a joint advocacy and lobbying strategy to counter CSAE. After further discussions with SRS and following the 4th SAIEVAC Ministerial Meeting recommendations, it was decided that the strategy developed by NACGs would be mainstreamed/integrated into overall SAIEVAC advocacy efforts through developing a participatory, a joint strategic document to counter Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse including its online manifestations.

Among the different areas covered under the CSO Project, the NACGs, in December 2015, identified the need to have a training programme on safe, meaningful and inclusive child participation that would also provide better understanding and impetus to the continuing efforts to establish a SAIEVAC Child Participation Forum.

Taking this into account, a training on child participation for the NACG Representation of all the SAARC Member States took place from 8-10th December 2016 in Colombo, Sri Lanka and the SRS was also represented. Additionally, a consultation with children of SAARC who have been engaged as advocates against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse followed the training on child participation. This event resulted in series of recommendations from children that they demanded to be included in the SAARC regional strategy on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) and its online manifestations. This regional strategy is currently being drafted and it will eventually be presented to SAARC countries for endorsement in a cross regional meeting in August 2018 (tentatively).

Discussions between NACG members and SRS (SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat) led to the following plan: this cross-regional meeting would benefit additional value if it was coupled with a children and youth assembly who could influence decisions regarding their own rights at regional level and submit their charter of demands to the relevant decisions makers and other stakeholders. Hence NACGs after consulting SRS, decided to organize a preparatory children assembly on 27th-28th December 2017, in order to plan the children and youth assembly at a cross regional level and ensure that children's voice would be heard to design the next actions relating to the protection of children of SAARC from Violence. It was decided that ASEAN representatives would also be invited as observers and share some of their experience in this preparatory and meeting as well as in the cross-regional meeting.

To this end, whilst NACG-Pakistan will organise the event, support from SAIEVAC and the Pakistani Ministry of Human rights is required for mobilizing other NACGs and facilitate this activity especially with regard to administrative procedures.

2. OBJECTIVES:

1. To plan the children and youth assembly at a cross regional level and ensure that children's voice would be heard to design the next actions relating to the protection of children of SAARC from Violence;
2. Promote cross learning between SAARC and ASEAN countries with regard to child participation in advocating against CSEA and child protection

2.1 Expected outcome:

A clear direction and safe space for a meaningful child and youth participation to influence / advocate for child protection at a cross regional level in 2018 is created;

2.2 Expected outputs:

- Draft TORs and programme developed by 50 children from SAARC for children and youth assembly at cross regional level tentatively planned in August 2018. The 50 children from SAARC include: a) two children from SAIEVAC board (Nepal and Bhutan), b) 1 child from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka who preferably have taken part in the previous children's consultation for the CSO project c) 44 children from Pakistan including one girl and one boy from the Afghan refugee community and children from various provinces of the country;
- A model of safe, meaningful, inclusive and creative child participation on advocating against CSEA and its online manifestation, as well as child participation in itself, is documented by January 2018.

3. AGENDA

PREPARATORY REGIONAL CHILDREN ASSEMBLY DAY 1, HIL VIEW HOTEL, F-7 MARKAZ 27-28th December 2017		
Timing	Activities	Responsible/speakers
10-10.15 am	Registration	
10.15-10.30	Security briefing	
10.30-10.35	Welcome remarks by NACG Chair, Mr. Syed Ishtiaq Gilani	
10.35-10.40	Pakistan efforts to reinforce	MH Mangi, MoHR IC, DG MoHR

	child participation in their own Protection	
10.40-10.50	What is SAIEVAC?	Dr Rinchen Chopel, DG SAIEVAC
10.50-11.00	Tea/group Photo	
11.00-12.30	Introduction Rules and roles Context of activity: what is SAARC? Map exercise What about the CSO project; objectives, expected results. Where do we come from in Pakistan? Interactive session with typical Dancing	Volunteers under lead facilitation of VK
12.3-13.30	Lunch	Ditto
2 to 5 pm	Recreational activity Lok Virsa	Ditto
PREPARATORY REGIONAL CHILDREN ASSEMBLY DAY 2, HIL VIEW HOTEL, F-7 MARKAZ		
10-10.15 am	Registration	
10.15-10.30 am	Recap of the previous session	
10.30 to 10.45 am	Energizer	
10.45-10.55 am	What should be the TORs of the children and youth summit? What? Where? Who? Why?	
	How? When? What for? Development of TORs	
10.55-11.10 am	Tea	
11.10-11.20 am	Presentation of the ToRs	
11.20 – 12.00	Preparation of a fresque relating to the TORs	
12- 1 pm	Lunch	
1-1.15	Energizer	
1.15 to 2 pm	What should be the program?	
2 pm to 3 pm	Sharing the program and game Tie	
3 to 4 pm	Exchanges with children from SAARC via Skype	
4 t 5 pm	Closing ceremony - Comments from Dr.	
	Rinchen	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mrs Agha Rabia Javeri, secretary MoHR, position of MoHR and efforts to promote child participation in their own protection. - Fresque given to the honourable secretary of MoHR by children - Certificates distribution - Vote of thanks Syed Ishtiaq Gilani 	
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4. PROCEEDINGS

Day One:



Valerie Khan, Co-Chair, NACG Pakistan, Executive Director, Group Development Pakistan

Prior to day one and in the context of a preparatory phase, GD Pakistan team went to visit some groups of children who had been elected or selected (according to the availability of children within target groups and as per criteria) and prepared them through a trust building meeting. In some cases, the meeting was also held to facilitate the nomination/election process. This enabled the children to feel comfortable to attend the consultation afterwards. They knew several facilitators and availed a child friendly environment. Those meetings could not be held everywhere by GDP team (it was done in Mashal school, Zamung Kor and NCPC), so partners were in charge of sensitising the remaining selected/elected children; other children already knew GDP team and felt comfortable with attending one of their events.

The session started with the registration of child participants and the playing of the National anthem of Pakistan. Afterwards, security briefing was given to children by the main session facilitator Ms Valerie Khan, co-chair NACG and Executive Director, Group Development Pakistan. Thirty eight children from Mashal Model School, Bari Imam, Islamabad participated and fifteen from the National Child Protection Center Islamabad. Child participants from other provinces joined the event. In total, 74 children, out of which 40 boys, 33 girls and 1 transgender child took part in the regional preparatory consultation. 2 boys and 2 girls from SAARC countries joined them through skype.

Lubna Hyyauddin, Ibtesaam Qaisarani, Hamza, Hisbar, and Zamraz Hayauddin, Zeeshan, Shandana Qazi, Kenizeh-Juliette Khan, Behram Lehri and Mumtaz Gohar volunteered as facilitators. Other facilitators were Tayyaba Qurban (GD Pakistan), Huma Khan (ASF Pakistan), Naeem Abbas (Brooke), Urooj Khaliq (LEF Lahore), Urooj (Nurse) served as the health facilitator under the supervision of the main facilitator, Ms Valerie Khan. Hence the overall facilitation was conducted by six men and eight women.

Mr Muhammad Hassan Mangi
Director General IC Unit, Ministry of Human Rights,
Government of Pakistan, SAIEVAC representative
Pakistan.

After a welcome note, delivered by NACG Pakistan Chairperson, MR Syed Ishtiaq Gilani, Mr Muhammad Hassan Mangi explained Pakistan’s efforts to reinforce child participation in their own protection. He also explained the Government of Pakistan’s legislative initiatives and support for child protection, he further added that one bill for child protection was enacted in March 2016 and specified that another would be presented soon to the upper house senate along with a revised Justice System Ordinance law.



Muhammad Hassan Mangi, Director General, Ministry of Human Rights, Pakistan

Dr Rinchen Chopel - Director General, SAIEVAC



Dr Rinchen Chopel, Director General, SAIEVAC

Dr. Rinchen Chopel started his remarks by acknowledging those who are a part of the NACGs and other bodies related to SAIEVAC. He thanked the chaperons, special guests from the government of Pakistan and the child participants. He briefed child participants about *what is “SAIEVAC”* and its objectives through an interactive question answer session with child participants.

He further explained SAIEVAC vision: all children, girls and boys and others, throughout South Asia, should enjoy their right to an environment free from all forms of violence,

abuse, exploitation, neglect and discrimination. He further asked children if they knew about the following thematic areas of SAIEVAC):

- Child Marriage
- Sexual Abuse and exploitation
- Child Labour
- Corporal Punishment
- Trafficking

He was pleased to know that most of the children were aware of the concepts. He briefly further clarified these thematic areas to the child participants. He talked about the decision making abilities of the children and advised them to speak up for their rights and take chance to explain to the adults what they wanted. He said he was committed to sharing the children’s message and contribute to support their efforts as much as he could.

The agenda for the session included a contact phase with a group play and an icebreaker to introduce the volunteers, welcome children and start the team/group building process.

Preparatory Regional Children Assembly Activities



Activity 1; Introduction

Activity 1 consisted of making 3 lines and each line competed against each other to pass the pencil to the other end of the line as quickly as possible. The each child presented him/herself and stated what his /her “special gift” was. This allowed children to build their self-confidence and realise they all had something special, all had a strength. For the facilitator, it served the purpose of identifying a talent pool to be capitalised upon during those two days.



Activity 2; Skit performance for awareness on UNCRC

Activity 2 four children volunteered to come front (1 girl, 3 boys). One acted as the United Nations and another as the Government of Pakistan and two as children. Children 1&2 demanded their country representative to make a law to make sure that their rights would be enforced, then the government of Pakistan (child 2) talked to the United Nations (Child 3). Both discussed and eventually, child 2 informed child 3 that they wanted to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was presented as a reminder of what happened in 1990 and children could understand the process of ratifying the UNCRC and committing to enforce child rights as described in this legally binding document.

Activity 3 aimed to discover SAARC countries. The facilitator helped children list SAARC countries and explained what SAARC was, then children volunteered to locate those countries on the map and paste their flag. This exercise enabled children to clarify the contextual framework of their consultation; they also felt they belonged to a larger group which prepared them for the Skype exercise the following day. Overall such exercises are healthy to build thirst for knowledge and to promote peace exchanges beyond borders, despite regional tensions.



Activity 3; SAARC Map exercise

Activity 4: after the SAARC geographical dimension, it was important to ensure the group cohesion by providing children with a positive sense of pride and belonging, so the mapping exercise was then articulated at a national and provincial level through dance: Children were asked to perform typical dances of their province in Pakistan. This helped to foster gender sensitivity as even girls came to dance, which is sometimes taboo in some Pakistani contexts. For example, a transgender child danced with some young girls and for a few minutes, they were all given the right to be considered equal and children simply.



Activity 4; Interactive session with typical dancing

Activity 5: was a group activity engaging children into discovering their basic rights. In this activity, children were divided into groups and each group was provided with chart papers and were asked to write the answer to this question

- What are your basic rights?

Each group after group discussion noted their answers on the charts and presented one by one. All groups after consultation with their group members answered the basic rights as follows

Here are the answers:

Group1

1. Every child should be given basic right of identity i.e. Child name and National Identity
2. Both mother and father of each child are responsible for the upbringing of child and Government should provide them with adequate facilities
3. Children should be given right to get both formal and religious education
4. Children should be given a good education so that they become able to play pivotal role in the society and for country
5. Children should not be involved in any kind of work (child labour)
6. Children should not be involved in any kind of labour at least till the matriculation and they should be given every right to get education.
7. Parents should respect the point of view/opinion and likes/dislikes of children
8. Care and love is the basic right of every child and should and this should not be ignored.



Group2

The second group represented their view and answers in the shape of a brainstorming diagram and presented their views of child rights as follows

- Good behaviour by other people
- Right to freedom
- Modest clothing
- Health facilities
- Good Environment
- Food
- Shelter/home
- Education
- Health
- Rest
- Birth Certificate
- Teachers
- Name/Identity
- Safety
- Right to play sports
- Respect
- Pocket Money

Group 3

- Teachers should teach with love and understanding, and should have the proper training and qualifications to teach the children at any level
- All schools should have a play ground
- In schools teachers and others should encourage the child's interests and passions, and should focus education towards these interests



- Respect your elders, and elders should respect their children as well.

Group 4

- Create a safe and welcoming environment for all children
- All children should have access to education
- Forced and arduous hours at work should be stopped and no work that a child don't want to do
- Places that children live go to school should be clean and hygienic and should not be unhygienic

- Children should not be forced to work or sent to work by their parents/ guardians in strangers houses/homes
- Prevent burning of garbage and other wastes that lead to infectious diseases for children: it should be managed and prevented
- Create more recreational areas and green places for children to play in and have access to
- Transportation from and to school, especially for children who live far away, should be made accessible and affordable for their parents and children

Group 5

- Right to live
- We need clean water
- Transgender child is also entitled to have equal human rights. He/she should have a respectable social status in Pakistan.
- Healthy food
- A transgender child needs police assistance
- Transgender child should have environmental right
- Education should be free and compulsory for a transgender child.
- Transgender child should be provided proper healthcare.
- Playground for transgender child.
- Transgender child should have decision making power,

Group 6

- Food and water (clean)
- Care and love
- Respect
- Education
- Protection
- No discrimination
- No child marriages
- Identity
- No corporal punishment
- Right to play
- Shelter
- Cloths
- Opportunity
- Participation



Children presenting their list of child rights



Group 7

- Education/Schools
- Scholarship for kids
- Nobody should bug us
- Food
- Clothes
- Right not to work and not beg
- Clean, good, healthy environment
- Transportation
- Complete safety
- Financial support to families who cannot support their children.
- Minimum age for marriage should be 18.

Group 8

- We need extra time for art work in Government schools.
- Clean water, healthy food and education.
- Shelter
- Girl's education
- Right to freedom and decision making power for girls.
- Equal participation of girls in all extra curriculum activities.
- End child marriages
- Girls should have more chances for outing.
- Freedom for expressions
- Freedom for decision making power.
- Protection against any form of violence.

Group 9

- Education
- Food
- Air (clean)
- Equality
- Implementations of child labour laws
- Free hospitals
- Free transportations
- Infrastructure
- End child marriage (minimum age 18)
- Girls should have equal rights to education
- More schools in rural areas
- More security for schools.

Feed back

At the end of the session child participants gave their feedback in one word and described the session as follows, this is what I liked, what I learnt:

- Opportunity to Participate and interact
- Enjoyed session and interactions
- Learned Good manners
- Child freedom
- Learned about child rights
- Learnt about south Asian countries (SAARC Countries)

- Learned about Team work
- Learned to Help others
- Learned to Respect others
- Pleasure
- Entertainment
- No discrimination
- No child marriage (Child rights)

Recreational activity Lok Virsa

After lunch the child participants visited National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage for musical event



organised by NACG Pakistan. In the event different regional folk singers and musicians from different provinces performed.

The children were invited to sing and join the dance as well.

Day two

The session started with the National anthem again and followed by recapitulation session, after the registration. Ms Valerie Khan (session facilitator) delivered a welcome speech, thanking the special guests for their tireless and precious effort for children.

Activity 1 Parents decision without your (children) consent

After recap of the day 1 of the preparatory regional children assembly, children were engaged in an activity in which children were asked to share an experience (only if they wanted to) for which they remembered that their parents decided something without asking them and how they felt. In response to this question, some children recalled and provided different instances where there was a decision about them without their consent. Some of the verbalised experiences are reproduced below:

- “They purchased my Eid dress/shoes without asking me”
- “When my parents told me to leave home, they never asked me if I agreed to it.”
- My parents moved to Islamabad from Gilgit Baltistan, and I had to change school and I did not like the new town, they never asked me if I wanted to stay back”
- “I want to study abroad after matriculation but my parents disagree and do not take my opinion in consideration”
- One child expressed that he has never observed any restriction from his parents and they are very supportive and ask for his consent
- “My Parents don’t allow me to play at my friend’s home, they do not listen to me to decide where I can play”

- “I wanted to attend a marriage ceremony but my parents refused to attend the ceremony”
- “my parents do not ask me what I want when they cut my hair, I want a fauji cut, they never ask me”
- “They do not ask me with whom I want to stay, I like to stay with my aunt.”
- “I wanted to attend my brother’s marriage but I not allowed by my parents, they did not ask me, they forbid me”.
- “I want to grow up and become a singer but my father refused and said it is not acceptable in our family, be a doctor. Mother also doesn’t allow me dancing at weddings whereas I loves dancing. They do not let me decide whom I want to be”. Same scenario was shared for a girl becoming a cricketer.
- One boy: “I want to have bicycle but they never ask me what kind of gift I want”.
- “They never ask me what I want to eat,” expressed a child.
- “They took me out of school, without asking my opinion.”
- One girl child expressed” in my tribe, girls cannot give their opinion”
- “When I want to have a musical instrument and go to the Park, my parents never listen to me.”
- “I want my father to send me a cell phone, but he did not ask and sent me a coat. I would have been happier with a mobile” one child conveyed.
- “Parents don’t ask if we want to go with them when they visit to restaurant for lunch or dinner.”
- “Parents don’t gave importance to the child will when selecting the school at the time of admission.”
- “I wants to have a doll, my parents do not ask me what I want”.
- “My parents decided to shift to Islamabad but I wanted to live in Skardu, they never consulted me”.
- “My father sold my bicycle without consulting me”, many children pointed out that parents sell thing against their will or without asking their opinion.
- One child said “ I wanted to visit Kaghan in summer vacations but I was rebuffed” , my mum and dad did not ask where I wanted to go.

What should be the ToRs of the children and youth summit?

To develop the children and Youth summit TORs a group activity was organized in which participants provided their inputs for the development of TORs through participation.

Group Activity: Development of ToRs

The participants were against divided into different groups. The activity was meant to link with the Day1 group activity and develop the TORs for the next consultation meeting tentatively planned in August 2018. The facilitator asked the following questions: What should the conference talk about? What should be done?

The following answers were collected:

More dances

More songs

Paintings and drawings

Have children talk to the UN, and talk to their governments

TV must be there to share our messages

Another activity was conducted in which the child groups were asked what change they are expecting from the regional consultation in response to the child right they identified in Day1 group exercise.



Group 1

1. Government should provide more buildings for the rehabilitation of children who have experienced a hard life or traumatizing experience.
2. More than one Child/Juvenile Court should be established in various areas.

Group 2

1. We want “free and compulsory education”.
2. We want President of Pakistan to “finish the child labour”.

Group 3

1. We need strong actions to stop violence against children.
2. We need strong actions for clean environment and water.

Group 4

1. We need hospitals. Poor children should have schools. We need machine (filtration plant) for clean water.
2. Poor children should have free schools, food, education or money for these.

Group 5



Group 6



Group 7

1. We want “Filtration plants”.
2. We want “Gas pipelines”.

Group 8

1. We want Government of Pakistan to pass Child Marriage Restrain (Amendment Bill) soon.
2. We want free education till Matriculation. Free institutes with financial support to family, to stop child labour.



Group 9

1. **Prevent inequality**; ways in which we can prevent inequality
 - Prevent child marriage by setting up better laws against early child marriages.
 - Safe schools so that both girls and boys can study without getting harassed.
 - Opportunities for both girls and boys.
2. **Trans gender's rights:**
 - Advocacy; Public statement recognising trans citizens as other citizens.
 - Safe spaces for trans community
 - Better protection under existing protective legislation.
 - Punishment for abusers.

Group 10

1. Equality between boys and girls.
2. Sports participation
3. End child marriages
4. Safety
5. More schools
6. We need to have law that every child must go to school until the age of 18 or 20.
7. Better quality of life with education.

Group 11

1. Trainings for teachers.
2. Awareness raising of children's rights/ UNCRC including FATA region.
3. Monitoring visits in FATA schools.

After development of ToRs each group presented in detail what has to be achieved.

Overall, according to the children's feedback in Pakistan, the consultation TORs should focus on:

- **Ensuring children's rights to education**
- **Countering child labour**
- **Promoting equality between boys and girls and transgender children (gender equality)**
- **Protecting children from abuse and violence**
- **Stopping child marriage**

- **Ensuring relevant infrastructures for children’s care: shelters, rehabilitation centers, hospitals, schools, safe transport, play-ground.**
- **Ensuring that children have access to clean water, clean environment and food.**
- **Ensuring that adults are nice, do not shout and do not hit them.**

Preparation of a fresque relating to TORs

The participants were involved in an interactive session to prepare a fresque in which all children participated



and art work expressed the TORs related ideas. The question was: how do you foresee/ imagine the consultation?

This allowed the children who had difficulties to orally verbalise the TORs to be given an alternative way of participating and expressing themselves. Meanwhile, the federal secretary for Human Rights, Mrs Rabia Agha Javeri, had arrived at the consultation. All the adult members present there appreciated the art work of the child participants and Dr. Rinchen asked the fresque to be kept and displayed for the next consultation

After lunch break, an energizer encouraged children to sing.

The Federal Ministry of Human rights also requested the facilitator to select tow children who would ten take care in other national events for child rights. 80% of the children wanted to nominate themselves, hence instead of elections, a lucky draw was organised (one draw for a different gender)

Later, two child members for next consultation meeting were selected from child participants through balloting. The children selected are

- Shumaila (Mashal Model School, Islamabad)
- Saleem (Mashal Model School, Islamabad)

It was heartening to see that all children were very supportive of each other all were congratulated and encouraged.

Skype Session with SAARC Country Children

As explained in the TORs of this consultation, time, administrative delays and political constraints had made it difficult to organise the issuance of visas on time for children from SAARC in order to avoid any undue pressure for those young activists, it was therefore decided to organise skype exchanges between the children. Out of seven NACGs, 5 took part in the consultation: Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. The children were delighted!

1. Sri Lanka - Ruma

On the second day of the conference, a group of students spoke to Ruma, a child from Sri Lanka. Shumaila Ramzan, a student from Peshawar Model School- Islamabad Branch, was the liaison between the children and Ruma. She translated between English and Urdu for the 5 female students from Mashal School (Bari Imam). Ruma discussed the problems that children faced in Sri Lanka and what should be addressed during this regional conference

According to Ruma, **safety** was the principal concern of children in Sri Lanka. Children do not feel safe, especially at home, due to marital issues between their parents. This insecurity affects them psychologically, which then manifests as poor academic performance due to difficulties in focusing on schoolwork. Ruma is of the view that this volatile domestic situation prevents children from performing well in school. Their educational plight is exacerbated if the parents divorced, which is often the case.

Another factor affecting children's education is lack of encouragement from their parents. Parents pressurize their children into working instead of studying, in order to ease the financial burden on the family. As a result, children must work extremely hard just to be able to attend school. The majority of children interviewed and interacting with Ruma preferred to attend school than work prematurely, children highlighted the violation of child labor laws in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

One problem faced by Sri Lankan children in both school and home is physical abuse. Corporal punishments are inflicted on children by teachers regularly, and even parents are quick to physically harm their children as a sign of displeasure. Physical abuse has lasting effects, both physically as well as psychologically. Shumaila, Ruma, and the other children all agreed that child rights were violated when corporal punishments occurred.

One positive point that was discussed was that all the children were comforted, knowing that they have fundamental rights and that they could share their views with people, that, despite the fact of living in other countries, shared similar situations.

2. The Maldives- Simyan



A group of children assembled from areas throughout Pakistan spoke to Simyan, a ninth grader from the Republic of Maldives, via Skype. Hizbar Hayauddin, a volunteer facilitator, translated Urdu and English to facilitate communication.

Simyan outlined the violations of child rights in the Maldives, chief of which was domestic violence. Children in The Maldives face domestic violence on a regular basis. This continuous exposure to physical abuse is detrimental to children in a multitude of ways.

Academic performance suffers as a result of domestic violence, due to insecure living environments for children which creates difficulties in focusing on schoolwork. A primary cause for the prevalence of child abuse in the form of domestic violence is due to lack of awareness on the part of the children of their rights. In addition, little to no enforcement of established laws is carried out, so perpetrators (i.e. parents) can carry out their actions with impunity.

According to Simyan, the best way to overcome this issue of domestic violence is by taking into the consideration the needs and opinions of the children, as child rights and violations of said rights are directly related to them. He thinks that children should be made aware of what their rights are and how to voice their opinions, through means such as seminars in school or assemblies like the one conducted in Islamabad. In addition, he is of the opinion that governing authorities should ratify/more specific laws and to enforce/improve existing ones. These two actions will allow children to take more of a stand against their abuse and abusers, as well as to punish those who inflict harm on children.

The students from Pakistan were in agreement with Simyan over the ways to address domestic violence, as it is an issue present in Pakistan, in addition to the Maldives. They took great interest in learning about the situation of children in the Maldives, as well as sharing with Simyan the issues children face in Pakistan.

3. Nepal – Bhawana Poudel

Bhawana Poudel connected with us at 3:00 pm, second day of Preparatory Regional Children Assembly via Skype. Children introduced themselves to Sharma along with Neetu Sharma (translator). Tayyaba Qurban, a facilitator from GD Pakistan, translated Urdu and English to facilitate communication. Discussion started when Pakistani children asked Sharma some questions;

Q.1 What challenges children face in Nepal?

Sharma informed the children that according to her, child marriage was the major issue in Nepal in both upper and lower class. She said “elite class marry their girl child to preserve their power and the poor are doing the same due to lack of resources. “

She quoted that according to the research by ‘Girls not brides’, Nepal has the highest rate of child marriage in the world. 37% of Nepalese girls are married before the age of 18. Poverty is both a cause and consequence of child marriage in Nepal. Food insecurity plays a key role too. Nepalese families that do not have enough food to eat are more likely to marry their daughters at a young age to ensure their security and decrease the financial burden. One study shows that 91% of people who were food secure married over the age of 19.



After child marriage, Sharma raised the issue of ‘child domestic labour’ in Nepal. Domestic work is a result of human trafficking. Child abuse is also a major problem which is done by the closed person, not by strangers. The Pakistani children stated that those problems were also prevailing in Pakistan.

Q.2 What should be the solution or action to fight against these challenges, according to you?

By promoting education we can overcome the challenges that children have to face in Nepal, Sharma said. There are no universities for higher education system to continue study in villages. Universities should be set up at district level. The Pakistani children really like this suggestion!

Q.3 Would you have any message for SAARC countries?

Child abuse is a major problem which is done by the closed person, not by strangers. So there should be awareness raising to stop child abuse through child club or school by SAARC government. Similarly children should have capacities to protect themselves from abusers so that they themselves can say NO to violence. SAARC media also has responsibilities they just share the information of incident but don't follow up on the incident, which is need to be done.

Sharma asked the following questions to Pakistani children: 1. What did you learn from the two days discussion in children assembly. The group of children explained her their rights and ways to achieve those rights that they learnt in two days session (taking part in events, training their friends, talking to the government) Another question asked by Sharma was : 2. What actions should take place to stop violence against children? Children shared their ideas in detail which mostly was about more education, arresting perpetrators and raising awareness.

4. Bhutan – Kinga

Kinga from Bhutan addressed a group of boys from Mashal School. The boys were excited to discover that Kinga was from the same country as Dr. Rinchen who joined them in greeting her. They asked about Bhutan and went to check the map to see where it was located again. The boys had never been on skype before so they were more excited about being on a computer than they were curious about children's rights in Bhutan in the beginning!. However they did briefly discuss some issues related to children's rights like the availability of clean drinking water. Furthermore the boys asked if Bhutan had load shedding of electricity, as is the case in Pakistan, to which the answer was no.



Moreover, Kinga was asked about the importance of children getting involved in their own protection, to which she answered that a child should know their own rights because otherwise they can be taken advantage of and manipulated. The boys having just learnt about their rights quickly jumped in and shared which right was most important to them. The Pakistani children believed that the government should pay parents a stipend to keep them in school so that they are not sent to earn. Finally, Kinga worried about the violence faced by children both physical and sexual. She felt that if children were more aware that they have a right to be protected then they would be empowered enough to say NO! and fight against the abuse and exploitation.

She thought this should be discussed at a top priority level in the next consultation tentatively planned in August 2018.

5. Afghanistan-Mirwais.

Mirwais was pleased to interact with other children from the other side of the border and to continue his past efforts as he previously took part in the regional conference on the strategy against Child Sexual Abuse and



Exploitation and its online manifestation. To him, the main problem children faced in Afghanistan was lack of access to education facilities which is exacerbated by the conflict prevailing in his country. Child Sexual Abuse and Child Labour were also mentioned by him and the children who talked to him who were from FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa also highlighted the same issues and the impact of conflict and terrorism on children's safety. Mirwais thought that it was important that children and youth were systematically consulted to discuss policies, laws and issues.

Hence overall, the skype exchanges and inputs from other children from SAARC regarding the ToRs of the children and youth summit in Bhutan can be summarised as follows:

- **Need to ensure participation of children and youth in events that concern policies and laws**
- **Sessions on awareness of children for self-protection from CSAE (including its online manifestation) is critical**
- **The summit must address child labour, CSAE, impact of conflict on children, children's rights to education and child marriage.**
- **Exchanges between children working on child rights from different countries must be included in the TORs**

As part of the closing ceremony, Dr. Rinchen, DG SAIEVAC, thanked the government representatives of Pakistan and NACG of Pakistan. He thanked the facilitators, all the SAIEVAC national mechanisms and NACGs participants and chaperons for their work to make this consultation successful and possible. He expressed his joy that two SAIEVAC child representatives were selected as a result of this consultation and committed to ensuring that children would be a part of the consultation process on child sexual abuse and exploitation. He also expressed that it always is a pleasure to work with children.

Ms Agha Rabiya Javeri, Federal Secretary MoHR, started her address by thanking Dr Rinchen, NACG Chair, Co-chair, children, chaperons and facilitators as well. She asked the children what they had learnt in the two days session. Many children spoke about their rights and their goals to achieve their rights in detail. She also ensured children that the Federal Ministry of Human Rights in Pakistan was working hard to get a child protection bill passed in the National assembly and constitute a National Commission on the Rights of the Child. She also added that she believed that we could benefit from the methods suggested during this consultation to protect children from any form of violence.



In the vote of thanks, children were highly appreciated for being part of this children assembly. She also added that children were the lifeblood of this session. All guest speakers similarly expressed their sincere thanks to all children.

To conclude the consultation, all participants were presented with certificates by Dr Rinchen, DG SAIEVAC, Ms Agha Rabiya Javeri, Federal Secretary MoHR, Mohammad Hassan Mangi, DG IC UNIT, MoHR, Valerie Khan, ED GD Pakistan, Syed Ishtiaq Gillani, NACG Chair.



6. FEEDBACK

At the end of the event, a final debriefing session was held and the following points were mentioned:

- This session provided an opportunity to directly learn from children i.e.
 - One of the emerging issues was child marriage, right to education and the need for playing
 - Children's views on different things differ greatly from adults and are extremely valuable
- Successfully held a fair and transparent selection/election process within a short timeframe

- Children were comfortable and active during the sessions, drawing is a useful tool to enable children who cannot speak well to express themselves and yet participate
- Some children came only the first day as they had to work and could not lose another day of income
- Children had a lot of experiences in addressing the CSAE issues which is very resourceful.
- Impressive teamwork by the organizing team
- Language is a major barrier for children to interact with other children; translation is crucial
- Important to hold ourselves accountable with follow up actions and fulfil the commitments we made to the children
- Need to make sure that the children who came to this consultation will be involved in further activities in their country
- Challenge also is how to protect children who are being abused now. Children often do not realize that they are being sexually abused (do not know if it is a good touch or bad touch)
- Amazed by children's activism and creativity.
- It was good that the facilitators didn't know everything so they could find their space.
- It was amazing to see how the consultation process mobilized children as so many of them wanted to present themselves to context elections as child representatives.
- It is important that chaperones do let children express themselves and do not put their own words into the children's mouth (that challenge was well managed by the facilitators)
- Different socio-economic and ethnic background are not problematic for children to interact with each other, but facilitation is crucial.
- Some areas lack children groups or structures and that in itself hampers the electoral process
- The election policies must also take into consideration the fact that positive quota must also be taken into consideration to ensure inclusiveness.
- Only 2 children with disabilities were included, no feedback was given from organisations working on disability. This must be addressed in future.
- Documenting the overall process of the workshop is essential to ensure knowledge sharing and prove that the value of child participation is real.

Lesson learned for next session are:

- It is observed that for the next consultation more time should be allocated for consultation sessions
- NACGs should liaise more proactively with government to implement the guidelines
- It is important to be at eye level with children.

7. CONCLUSION

The objectives of this workshop and capacity building exercise were achieved as follows:

Objectives:

5. To plan the children and youth assembly at a cross regional level and ensure that children's voice would be heard to design the next actions relating to the protection of children of SAARC from Violence: elements to plan the session have been notified in this report. To this effect NACGs will link with SAIEVAC for the next summit.
6. Promote cross learning between SAARC and ASEAN countries with regard to child participation in advocating against CSEA and child protection: this report will now be shared with CRC Asia as the ED of CRC Asia could not attend the session at the last moment, it will serve as an resource material for CRC Asia and will be discussed in the next partnership meeting in 2018.

Expected outcome:

7. A clear direction and safe space for a meaningful child and youth participation to influence / advocate for child protection at a cross regional level in 2018 is created; this will be the second child participatory exercise of this project at SAARC level and it will serve the purpose of developing several policies at SAARC level. The children's recommendations will be used to develop the TORs of the children and youth summit but also, the movie that has been produced to talk about child participation and child protection will be used and showed during an international human rights conference taking place in Islamabad on 19th-21st February 2018 and in the cross regional conference to be tentatively held in April 2018 in Bhutan.

Expected outputs:

8. Draft TORs and programme developed by 50 children from SAARC for children and youth assembly at cross regional level tentatively planned in August 2018. The 50 children from SAARC include: a) two children from SAIEVAC board (Nepal and Bhutan), b) 1 child from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka who preferably have taken part in the previous children's consultation for the CSO project c) 44 children from Pakistan including one girl and one boy from the Afghan refugee community and children from various provinces of the country: [this document is attached to this report](#)
9. A model of safe, meaningful, inclusive and creative child participation on advocating against CSEA and its online manifestation, as well as child participation in itself, is documented by January 2018.

Beyond simply establishing deliverables as outlined in the photos of the charts attached, the workshop managed to yield two legitimate child representatives to SAIEVAC and hence the SAARC environment – a feat which was believed to be beyond the scope of the workshop at the outset. NACG members witnessed how to hold a fair and transparent selection/election with minimal preparation time, while planning but also improvising over the course of the workshop to ensure that all sessions were being held in the most child-friendly manner. Energizers were designed spontaneously and implemented as needed (a basket of energisers was provided but those were selected as per the need of the moment).

As a usual caveat, it is important to mention that although a specific agenda was designed, the progress of the workshop was adjusted to the needs of the participants so that maximum positive participation and effectiveness of the training components would be ensured. Critical values such as mutual respect and tolerance were present all over the workshop and positive energy was ensured through vibrant energizers that contributed to the group bonding. When other group members than the facilitator were available, they were invited to join and take the lead in the activity. This also provided space for strong and multiple engagement of the group members. But two of the quotes that probably moved us all and anchored our dedication and commitment to work for the children of SAARC was when one child asked “Really, are you serious? Will I really be able to talk about my problems with someone from the government?” and when another one stated “thank you, we as transgender children are always pushed aside, nobody wants to listen to us, thank you for accepting us here”.

In solidarity with the children of SAARC...