



South Asian Child Rights Group Calls for Robust Protection of Child Rights

Statement of the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG)

20 November 2014: As the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is marked worldwide, the interagency South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG), working in close partnership with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Apex Body, namely the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC), commends all efforts by Governments and other key actors that have contributed to strengthening children's rights and protection in South Asia.

Recognizing that any form of violence against children deprives them of their rights, the SACG calls for urgent holistic and sustainable approaches to addressing both the protection and developmental needs of children and the compounding root causes that are often deep, structural, interwoven and mutually reinforcing. Among these are widespread poverty, gross inequality of income and opportunities, discrimination based on harmful traditions, class or caste, bonded labour situations, and poor resilience to shocks.

The situation in South Asia, as elsewhere, clearly warrants accelerated action to end all forms of violence against all children in all settings. The SACG draws attention, in particular to findings that South Asia has the highest proportion of married 15 to 19 year olds – more than in any other single region, with 29 percent girls in the South Asia region entering into early marriage.¹ South Asia continues to have large numbers of child labourers, with Asia-Pacific being host to the largest number worldwide – 78 million of the 5-17 years age group of the global 168 million.² Corporal punishment, trafficking of children and sexual abuse and exploitation are also widely reported across South Asia.

Noting the wide-ranging achievements and commitments that Governments have made in regard to children, the SACG calls on South Asian Governments, as primary duty bearers, to:

- Strengthen policies and laws and their enforcement to enhance the protection of all children in South Asia in line with the rights defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights treaties;
- Develop and implement strategies to reach vulnerable families and children and prevent them from falling into any form of exploitation;
- Make national child protection systems child friendly and responsive to children's multiple needs;

¹ *Hidden in Plain Sight*. A statistical analysis of violence against children (UNICEF 2014)

² *Marking progress against child labour*- Global estimates and trends 2000-2012 (ILO 2013)



- Strengthen national child rights institutions, enhance institutional capacities, and ensure the participation of civil society and children in planning and decision-making processes;
- Strengthen national justice systems to ensure appropriate penalties and full enforcement for violations of laws that protect the rights of children and, further, put in place mechanisms for the protection of children in situations where they find themselves as victims or offenders;
- Promote dialogue at all levels, involving government, communities, families, and children themselves in order to promote attitudes and protective practices for children; and
- Allocate adequate resources to undertake these steps and additional measures that are needed to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of children.

Recognizing the distinctive and unique significance of the SAARC's Apex body on Children, **the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC)**, the SACG calls on the SAIEVAC Governing Board Members and the SAARC Governments to fully implement its *Five-Year Work Plan* and give effect to its commitments, including its recent *Kathmandu Call for Action to End Child Marriage in South Asia*, with support and cooperation from all concerned entities of the governments, civil society and children and the international community.

TOGETHER, we can realize the vision that all children in South Asia enjoy their right to protection from all forms of violence in all settings!

About SACG

The South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG) brings together United Nations agencies and international and regional NGOs and other actors working at the regional level for child rights and protection in South Asia. Among these are ILO (SACG Chair), World Vision International (SACG Co-Chair), Child Helpline International, ECPAT International, EDUCO, Plan International, Save the Children, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre de Hommes, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, Centre for Reproductive Rights, Planete Enfants, and UNESCO, working in partnership with the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and its national mechanisms.

Through multidimensional efforts, SACG aims to end all violence against children in South Asia in partnership with similar national groups and coalitions across the region. We support and engage in policy dialogue and advocacy, coordination, networking, capacity building, knowledge sharing, and new knowledge generation activities. SACG maintains a longstanding partnership with SAIEVAC and the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children.

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