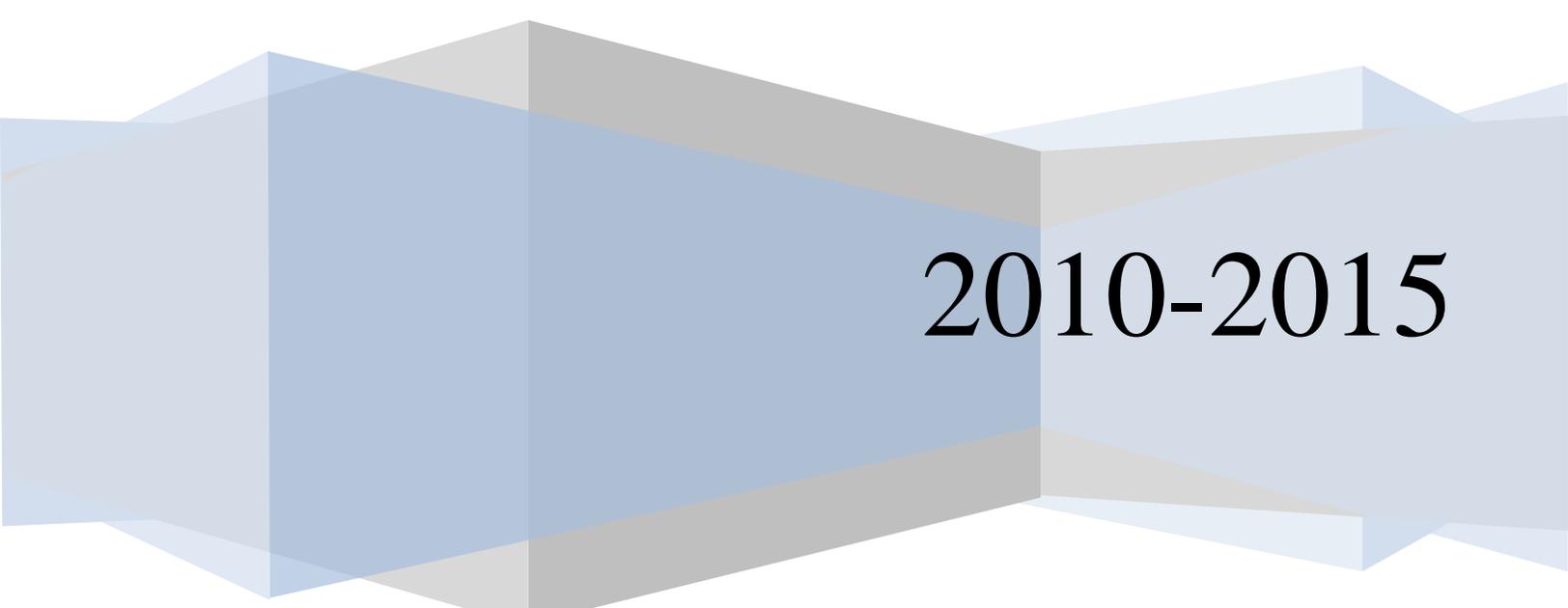


The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC)

Workplan



2010-2015

Contents

1. Background.....	1
2. Vision, Aims, Scope, Definitions	2
2.1 Vision	2
2.2 Aims	2
2.3 Scope and Definitions	2
3. Strategic Objectives:	3
3.1 Objective 1: REGIONAL COOPERATION	3
3.2 Objective 2: NATIONAL STRATEGY.....	3
3.3 Objective 3: LEGISLATIVE MEASURES	4
3.4 Objective 4: PREVENTION	4
3.5 Objective 5: DATA COLLECTION	5
3.6 Objective 6: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND LEARNING	5
3.7 Objective 7: CHILD CARE STANDARDS	6
3.8 Objective 8: REPORTING.....	6
3.9 Objective 9: Referral Mechanisms.....	7
3.10 Objective 10: Recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration	7
3.11 Objective 11: THE JUSTICE SYSTEM	7
3.12 Objective 12: EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING.....	8
3.13 Objective 13: CHILD AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION.....	8
4. Issue Based Action.....	9
4.1 Expected Result: EARLY MARRIAGE.....	9
4.2 Expected Result: TRAFFICKING	9
4.3 Expected Result: SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION	10
4.4 Expected Result: CORPORAL PUNISHMENT	10
4.5 Expected Result: CHILD LABOUR	11
Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.....	12
Communications Framework.....	13
Key Advocacy Messages	15
KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN SOUTH ASIA	16
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DOCUMENTS	18

SAIEVAC WORKPLAN (2010-2015)

1. Background

The governments of South Asia have followed up the recommendations to the UN Study on Violence Against Children (2006) to varying degrees. Current initiatives to protect children from violence are fragmented, largely uncoordinated and ad hoc. Adopting a child protection systems approach means children are treated as individuals and receive a comprehensive range of services for larger overall impact. It comprises the set of strategies, policies, plans, laws, regulations and services needed across all social sectors — especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice — to support prevention and response to protection related risks.

Responsibilities need to be spread across government agencies, with services delivered by national and local authorities, non-State providers, and community groups, making coordination between sectors and levels, including routine referral systems, a necessary component of effective child protection systems. Strengthening such systems requires attention to policy reform, institutional capacity development, planning, budgeting, monitoring and information systems. Child protection systems are most effective when structured around community-based protection and require an aware and supportive public.

Through the formation of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) governments have reiterated their commitment to addressing the enormous scale and urgency of violence against children in all forms and this workplan is a strategic framework to coordinate, standardize, and monitor progress annually.

While the UN Study's recommendations are an overall *broad* framework for all governments in South Asia, this workplan provides *specific* actions for governments in the region and offers practical indicators to ensure governments can measure change.

2. Vision, Aims, Scope, Definitions

2.1 Vision

SAIEVAC's vision is that all children, girls and boys, throughout South Asia enjoy their right to an environment free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and discrimination.

2.2 Aims

The aims of the workplan are

- a. To ensure the realization of children's rights as stated in the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols
- b. To prevent and respond to all forms of neglect, abuse, exploitation and violence against children in all settings
- c. To promote the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of integrated national strategies with adequate budgets and resource allocation to prevent and protect children from violence and ensure response
- d. To reinforce regional cooperation to end violence against children in South Asia

2.3 Scope and Definitions

A child shall mean any person under the age of 18 years and will include adolescents in its mandate.

In line with Article 19 of the UNCRC, "*violence*" is defined as including all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect and negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. This definition covers exposure of children to violence in the home, communities, schools, institutions, workplaces, and in development and emergency settings. Violence is understood to occur not only between adults and children but also between children.

Violence shall be used as a general term encompassing all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

Gender aspects of violence will be addressed as part of the integrated approach and due account will be taken of the different risks boys and girls face in respect of violence and of the different consequences of violence for girls and boys.

All children within the jurisdiction of States regardless of their sex, race, colour, language, religion, caste, class, disability or other status, national or social origin, political or other opinion should be protected from all forms of violence and discrimination.

3. Strategic Objectives:

By 2015, Governments of South Asia will have reached the objectives and measured progress through the use of the indicators below. Progress on output indicators will be reported on an annual basis and submitted to the SAIEVAC Secretariat and Board.

3.1 Objective 1: REGIONAL COOPERATION

Member States will exchange experiences and good practices, provide each other mutual assistance, facilitate implementation of regional agreements and coordinate and cooperate to capitalize on the experiences of States to end violence throughout the South Asian Region.

Indicators:

- # of technical meetings organized by SAIEVAC to support States
- # of meetings organized by SAIEVAC to share experiences and best practice throughout the region
- # of reports and publications produced on experiences and best practices
- # of technical papers and recommendations made to SAARC

3.2 Objective 2: NATIONAL STRATEGY

By 2015, All States have developed and started implementing a comprehensive national strategy, policy, or plan of action on violence against children which is integrated into the national planning process with realistic and time-bound targets, adequate resources and is coordinated and monitored by a nodal agency that has the human and financial capacity to involve multiple sectors.

Indicators:

- By 2011, # of States that have developed and adopted a national plan of action to end violence against children that specifies the role of each ministry at every level of government and identifies and secures adequate resources for implementation, has time bound realistic targets
- By 2011, # of States with a nodal agency with primary responsibility for the protection of children against violence which has assumed a key coordinating and monitoring role including budgeting and allocation of resources
- # of states with adequate funding and human resources to implement the national strategy and plan of action

3.3 Objective 3: LEGISLATIVE MEASURES

By 2015, all States have developed and are enforcing national legislative measures to prevent, prohibit and eliminate all forms of violence against children in all settings including in the families, in schools, in communities, workplaces, institutions and emergency situations and brought national laws, bylaws, policies, regulations, plans and programmes in line with the UNCRC and other International and Regional legal instruments and agreements.

Indicators:

- # of States conducting a consolidated review which identifies gaps and proposes recommendations on national policies, legislations and practices to address violence
- # of States who have adopted legislation to end all forms of violence against children in all settings including prohibiting all forms of sexual violence and abuse, corruption of children and solicitation of children for sexual purposes, prohibiting corporal punishment and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of children, both physical and psychological, prohibiting all harmful traditional and customary practices, such as early and forced marriage, honour killings and bondage, prohibiting exposure of children to violent and harmful content, irrespective of its origin and through any medium, prohibiting female feticide and child sacrifices and prohibiting all forms of exploitation of children through the use of new technologies.
- # of States who are enforcing legislation that bans violence against children
- # of States where perpetrators are held accountable in a court of law for their crimes and punished according to law and in the best interests of the child
- # of States where national laws obligate the respect of the right of the child to be heard and to attribute due weight to children's views
of States where birth registration is mandatory and free of cost and can be done by mothers
- # of States that have free and compulsory education

3.4 Objective 4: PREVENTION

By 2015, all States have measures in place to prevent all forms of violence against children in all settings, which address underlying causes as well as more immediate risk and protective factors

Indicator

- # of States that have mechanisms in place to identify risk factors as well as children and families at risk
- # of States that have allocated adequate resources to address risk factors in order to prevent violence against children
- # of States that have legislation and policies in place that address gender and other inequalities such as those based upon national or social origin, language, religion, and ability/disability or # of States that are implementing legislation and policies that address gender and other inequalities
- # of States that have economic and social policies in place that address poverty or # of States that are implementing economic and social policies that address poverty

- # of States that promote social norms which do not condone violence against children and which promote non-violent values

3.5 Objective 5: DATA COLLECTION

By 2015, all States have developed and started implementing systematic national research and consolidated data collection, analysis, and dissemination systems disaggregated by sex, race, language, religion, caste, class, disability or other status, national or social origin, to inform evidence-based effective action, mobilize adequate resources and assess progress achieved.

Indicator

- # of States who have established national databases with data collection systems at local, district and national level which include children's births and deaths, children entering or leaving institutions, on persons convicted of violent offenses against children and other child protection issues
- # of States who have carried out baseline interview studies with representative groups of children, parents and other caregivers to identify the experience of children of all forms of violence
- # of States who are collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the length and outcomes of judicial proceedings involving children are collected
- # of States who have agreed regional standards for data collection to ensure comparability of data

3.6 Objective 6: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND LEARNING

By 2015, all States have built the capacity of all professionals who work with or for children (for example social workers, counselors, foster carers, police officers, lawyers, judges, teachers, health care professionals, school principals, youth works, people employed by detention facilities and child-care institutions, immigration and humanitarian workers, government officials/policy makers, etc.) to improve prevention, detection and response.

Indicators:

- # of States with regular in-service training on child protection is in place for all government employees working for and with children such as Ministry officials both national, high-level managers, police, health care professional, lawyers, teachers, care-givers working in state institutions, public information and media specialists, export and import officials, army and border security forces etc.
- # of States that provide short training on prevention and response to all forms of violence against children for politicians, members of parliament and other non-government policy and decision-makers and private sector including Chambers of commerce etc
- # of States with national curriculum regulations for relevant professions should include compulsory, ongoing training on prevention, identification, assessment and reporting of violence against children and the protection and continuity of care to children
- # of States with Bachelor's of Social Work or Master's of Social Work programmes

- # of States with child development and child counseling Bachelors and Master's programmes
- # of States employing social workers as government employees
- # of states that provide short training on prevention and response to all forms of violence against children for religious institutions, their leaders and related opinion makers.

3.7 Objective 7: CHILD CARE STANDARDS

By 2015, All States have developed standards for all caregivers of children and for alternative care options such as community-based care and regulations for institutions, services and facilities for the care, education and protection of children which entails proper case management and regular and independent monitoring.

Indicators:

- # of States with regulations and standards in place for institutions, services and facilities for the care, education and protection of children including special education, pre-school and crèche facilities
- # of States annually monitoring all institutions, services and facilities including obtaining feedback from children getting services or living in the institutions
- # of social workers, psychosocial counselors, doctors, nurses, police, judicial officers, caregivers trained in case management
- # of juvenile detention centres operating in each State
- # of institutions, services and facilities who adopt Codes of Good Conduct incorporating the prohibition, prevention and rejection of all forms of violence against children and reporting obligations
- # of States that ensure the supervision of the safety, well-being and development of any child placed in alternative care and the regular review of the care arrangement provided

3.8 Objective 8: REPORTING

By 2015, all States have ensured that all professionals working with or for children (including those working for the State) who suspect acts of violence have been committed against a child are required by law to report the crime. Institutions or facilities in contact with children should be required to investigate allegations quickly and fully. Reporting systems should be safe, well publicized, confidential, accessible and child friendly, allowing children, their representatives and others to report violence against children.

Indicators:

- # of States with mandatory reporting systems in place
- # of States with a national toll-free child helpline
- # of States with victim and witness support programmes in place to ensure privacy and confidentiality is maintained

3.9 Objective 9: Referral Mechanisms

By 2015, all States have clearly defined procedures for the referral of child victims of violence and the modalities for inter-agency cooperation (that is between social services, education, health, police, prosecution authorities, voluntary and private agencies) following an assessment of the specific circumstances of each particular victim, given due weight to his/her views, and when it is in the best interest of the child also to her/his parents' or guardians' views.

Indicators:

- # of States with procedures in place for the referral of child victims
- # of States with procedures to assess child victims without delay
- # of States with advocacy and support services to encourage children to speak to relevant authorities about their experience of violence
- # of states with trained Best Interest Determinations (BID) committees established
- # of individual cases reported and actions taken to respond to the child victim by individual countries

3.10 Objective 10: Recovery, rehabilitation and social reintegration

By 2015, all States have taken all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and rehabilitation of child victims and witnesses of violence and their families if necessary, without delay and in an environment that fosters children's health, self-respect and dignity.

Indicators:

- # of States with accessible, child-friendly and universal recovery and reintegration services including legal, health and social services, are provided to all child victims of violence
- # of States with services which follow a multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach

3.11 Objective 11: THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

By 2015, all States have judicial systems that pursue the best interests of the child and respect the rights of the child including the child's right to protection from violence.

Indicators:

- # of States with child friendly judicial systems which protect the privacy of children when necessary
- # of States who expedite judicial proceedings involving children
- # of States with free legal aid provided to child victims, witnesses and perpetrators of violence

- # of States with a minimum age of criminal responsibility set at a minimum of 12 years
- # of States with alternatives to institutional care for child perpetrators
- # of states that have social workers and case workers to support with judicial enquiries and enforcement agencies.

3.12 Objective 12: EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

By 2015, all States have made information on the rights of the child and child protection widely known to both adults and children through awareness raising, public information and media campaigns. Additionally, South Asian governments focus campaigns to address specific national issues (such as early marriage, corporal punishment), breakdown misconceptions and change societal behaviour.

Indicators:

- # of awareness raising campaigns in each country addressing causes and consequences of early marriage, corporal punishment, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking and child labour
- # of awareness raising campaigns conducted to educate parents, caregivers and communities on positive discipline techniques, non-violent values and the consequences of corporal punishment
- # of awareness public education campaigns which teach caregivers how to give care

3.13 Objective 13: CHILD AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

By 2015, all States support the meaningful and active participation of civil society, children, and young people so that they can prevent and monitor violence against children, make recommendations to end violence against children and be involved in decision-making processes for actions to end violence against children.

Indicators:

- SAIEVAC establishes one regional forum for children's participation
- # of States with a national forum for children's participation
- # of States with national forum for civil society participation
- # of states that have established awards, recognition and prizes for pioneers, leaders and child rights activists including children

4. Issue Based Action

The issues of early marriage, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, corporal punishment, and child labour are seen as extremely critical issues that are affecting children throughout the region. Gender and discrimination are cross-cutting issues throughout all areas. Additionally, lack of birth registration is an important and is a preventive measure for many forms of violence. Birth registration provides an official record of a child's existence, nationality and age and is considered a fundamental human right under Article 7 of the UNCRC and should therefore be made mandatory and free of cost in all countries in South Asia. For more information about the severity of these issues in the region please see ANNEX 1.

All South Asian Governments commit to implement the following recommendations and report back to SAIEVAC using the indicators provided. All recommendations are in line with the 'SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in South Asia' and the UNCRC.

4.1 Expected Result: EARLY MARRIAGE

By 2015, All States have raised the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls to 18 and implement article 4(3)(d) of the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in South Asia.

Indicators

1. # of States where 18 is the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls
2. # of States who show a percentage decrease in number of early marriages nationally
3. # of States that actively enforce legislation banning forced and early marriage
4. # of States where birth registration is compulsory and free of cost and can be done by mothers
5. # of States where marriage registration is compulsory and free of cost
6. # of States which have defined an age for sexual consent that does not discriminate between boys and girls
7. # of States which have mapped and identified geographic areas where early marriage is still high

4.2 Expected Result: TRAFFICKING

By 2015, all States have implemented all provisions of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and taken specific measures to protect children from being trafficked

Indicators

1. # of States that incorporate the provisions of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution through the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

4.3 Expected Result: SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

By 2015, all States have taken the necessary steps to end sexual abuse and exploitation against children by adopting comprehensive legislation, ratifying all relevant international and regional instruments and enforcing a Code of Conduct for telecommunications services (i.e. internet providers, mobile phone companies, internet cafes) and travel and tour outlets to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation.

Indicators:

1. # of States that have legislation to prohibit all forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment including physical and non-physical forms in all settings against both boys and girls
2. # of States that are enforcing and implementing legislation that prohibits all forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment including physical and non-physical forms in all settings against both boys and girls
3. # of States that have ratified the UNCRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
4. # of States that have ratified ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour
5. # of States that prevent and protect children from exploitation in brothels, dance bars and restaurants and similar establishments
6. # of telecommunications services in each country that have adopted and enforce a Code of Conduct
7. # of travel and tourism industry in each country that have adopted and enforce a Code of Conduct

4.4 Expected Result: CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

By 2015, all States have identified the necessary actions and measures to prohibit all corporal punishment in all settings including law reform and are reinforcing positive parenting practices and positive classroom management programmes.

Indicators:

1. # of States that have laws in place to ban corporal punishment in all settings including at home, schools, institutions, workplaces
2. # of parenting programmes developed at national, district, local level.
3. # of teachers and health professionals trained to offer positive parenting counselling services
4. # of parents reached in each country
5. # of States including positive discipline techniques in national teacher training programmes
6. # of teachers trained in positive discipline techniques

4.5 Expected Result: CHILD LABOUR

By 2015, States recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development by ratifying ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Indicators:

1. # of States that have ratified ILO Convention 182
2. # of States that have programmes where children can combine work with educational opportunities
3. # of States that have initiated a Code of Conduct for protecting children in workplaces

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The overall objectives of the SAIEVAC M&E framework are:

1. To measure and demonstrate the impact of SAIEVAC
2. To measure progress against expected results on regular basis
3. To ensure quality of SAIEVAC's work
4. To ensure effective and appropriate use of the financial and human resources
5. To hold SAIEVAC accountable to Member Governments, SACG, children, donors and partners
6. To clarify roles and responsibilities for M&E

The Monitoring and Evaluation of SAIEVAC activities will be done against:

1. The Strategic objectives and indicators as defined in the workplan
2. The expected results and indicators under each thematic issue including: violence against children, child protection systems, trafficking, early marriage and sexual abuse and exploitation, corporal punishment, child labour

The Monitoring and Evaluation will consist of:

1. 1 Annual Report indicating main achievements and activities at country and regional level, giving the rational for deviations in progress and recommendations for the next years plan
2. 1 Annual Learning Review at regional and national level including a range of stakeholders such as government, civil society, children organisations
3. 1 annual financial audit conducted by independent audit company for SAIEVAC Secretariat
4. 1 Mid-Term Review of SAIEVAC objectives and impact after 2 years of implementation of the SAIEVAC Plan
5. 1 final Evaluation involving government, civil society and children by December 2015

The Roles and Responsibilities within the reporting process:

1. SAIEVAC Secretariat will be responsible for providing an annual progress report to the board showing main achievements reached against the plans and rational for deviation
2. SAIEVAC Coordinators report annually on progress within country to the SAIEVAC Secretariat
3. SAIEVAC Secretariat will be responsible for coordinating the annual learning review undertaken by the SAIEVAC National Coordinators and consolidating the report for submission to the board
4. The SAIEVAC Secretariat will facilitate the annual audit
5. The Board is responsible for conducting the Mid-Term Review and the Evaluation
6. SAIEVAC Board shares progress internally and externally to key stakeholders including SAARC through strategic communication

Note: If integrated into SAARC, SAIEVAC will follow SAARC monitoring and evaluating processes

Communications Framework

Clear communication about SAIEVAC and its role in ending violence against children is key to its success. Therefore all coordinators are responsible to ensure clear and timely communication through the identified channels.

Internal Communications

Internal communications will be lead by the SAIEVAC Secretariat. The SAIEVAC Programme Manager is responsible for all regular communication with Coordinators.

Objectives

- To facilitate effective communications (consistent, timely and relevant information)
- To inform governments and SACG, ensuring that they are aware of SAIEVAC and their contribution to ending violence throughout the region
- To be effective in the use of communication tools and methods
- To communicate successes and share best practice

Methods

- Board and sub group meeting agendas and minutes will be circulated to Coordinators
- Email circulation lists are held for disseminating information
- All e-mails will include contact details to promote feedback
- SAIEVAC Website updated as a prime resource for Coordinators to access information. All reports, minutes and other important documents will be placed on the website <http://www.sacg.info/forum.php>
- Events and conferences
- Bi-annual board meeting
- SAF Programme Manager available by phone
- Personal contact with Coordinators

Standards

- Agendas – circulated not less than 6 weeks prior to meeting
- Minutes circulated not later than 2 weeks after meeting
- Annual report – produced annually in January
- Newsletter – produced annually in June
- Additional documents circulated to all interested parties.

External Communications

External communications is the main responsibility of the SAIEVAC Secretariat; however, all Country Coordinators are responsible for communication within their country.

Objectives:

- To increase SAIEVAC visibility across a diverse audience
- To promote networking and exchange from key actors
- To promote consistent messages about SAIEVAC
- To increase Governmental support for SAIEVAC at all levels

Key Audiences

- Government officials including key Ministers and Prime Minister/President
- General public
- Children
- Media outlets
- UN Agencies, INGO's, NGOs, and CBOs

Methods

- Media – press invited to key events and informed through distribution of press releases (to be written by SAIEVAC Secretariat when necessary)
- Website – hosted on the SACG website and updated by SACG Chair
- Conferences or workshops- held nationally by governments to inform key stakeholders
- Annual Newsletter- to be composed by SAIEVAC Secretariat and circulated by coordinators
- Publications – including minutes, agendas, SAIEVAC Updates
- Interviews
- E-mail information
- Involving children in meetings and workshops

Key Messages

- The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) is a collaboration of South Asian States who have joined forces to have a greater impact for children
- Every child has the right to a life free from violence. SAIEVAC works to ensure this right throughout the region
- SAIEVAC believes children can make a valuable contribution to their own development, and works to engage children at the highest level in decision-making processes

Key Advocacy Messages

- 1. Implement credible national plans.** Governments of South Asia need to implement national plans for ending violence against children. Some of these plans exist on paper but are not properly implemented; in other cases plans will need to be developed or strengthened. National plans should focus on creating an integrated and holistic approach by developing child protection systems that respond to violence from the prevention stages through to rehabilitation and reintegration of children. Donors, international agencies, and local and national NGOs should assist in the development of plans and implementation.
- 2. Legally ban all forms of violence in all settings.** The legal prohibition of violence is important as it conveys a clear message of political commitment to prevention work and the use of non-violent alternatives for conflict resolution. It constitutes a vital safeguard for child victims and witnesses, being a strong reference for capacity-building initiatives and the development of guidance and codes of conduct for professionals working with and for children. Law reform gains renewed value when used in support of public information and awareness-raising activities, for promoting positive discipline, ending harmful practices, social mobilization and behavior change.
- 3. Mobilise additional resources.** Governments need to mobilize additional resources to address all issues of violence in a comprehensive manner so that services reach marginalized populations. Donors, international agencies, and local and national NGOs should support this process.
- 4. Recognise violence goes beyond the physical.** Violence is multidimensional and includes both physical and psychological abuse, neglect and exploitation. It calls for a holistic approach to the treatment of the circumstance of the violent incident, towards the child and towards the perpetrator (s). The best interest of the child must be viewed in this context when designing societal reactions and responses.
- 5. Understand that both boys and girls experience violence.** It is a common misconception in South Asia that only girls suffer from violence and that boys are able to protect themselves. In fact it has been shown that boys also experience violence and in some settings may be more vulnerable to violence. Governments need to ensure that legislation and programmes protect and prohibit violence against both boys and girls and address their particular needs in different settings.

KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN SOUTH ASIA

Early Marriage

Early marriage is rampant in South Asia with 46 per cent of young women reporting being married before the age of 18. Early marriage usually occurs because of poverty and the lack of economic opportunities for girls in rural areas. Girls are either seen as an economic burden or valued as capital for their exchange value in terms of goods, money or livestock. Early marriage may also be seen as a way of protecting young girls and ensuring their security. Research has shown that child brides are often more likely to experience domestic violence and sexual abuse and least likely to take action against this abuse. They attain lower schooling, lower social status in their husbands' families, have less reproductive control, and suffer higher rates of maternal mortality. They are often forced out of school without an education and experience health problems as their bodies are too immature to give birth.

Sexual abuse and exploitation

The most hidden and underreported form of violence against children and youth is sexual abuse. Sexual abuse affects both boys and girls and often happens within the family, in schools and the community, in the majority of cases (outside armed conflict zones) perpetrated by someone familiar to the child. Additionally, commercial sexual exploitation of children continues to be one of the most pervasive violations of children's rights in South Asia and includes child abuse through child prostitution, sex tourism, child pornography, internet pornography and trafficking. Recent studies provide evidence of sexual exploitation of boys to a much larger extent than previously recognized. The victims of exploitation and abuse are also at high risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Sexual abuse and exploitation are seldom reported because of a lack of child protection services, a lack of awareness-raising of them as human rights violations and crimes and because of the stigma faced by victims of such abuse and exploitation.

Trafficking

The criminal and clandestine nature of trafficking makes it difficult to gather reliable data but child trafficking is widespread in South Asia, and include both internal trafficking and trafficking across international borders. Victims of trafficking end up in various forms of abuse and human rights violations including sexual and economic exploitation, i.e. doing domestic work, working in factories, on the streets, or in other forms of hazardous labor that come in the way of the children's enjoyment of rights and fundamental freedoms. A common feature of child trafficking is that young girls and boys are often trafficked from rural communities to urban areas.

Traffickers are motivated by financial gain, and sometimes lure young girls into sex work on false pretenses. Children are vulnerable to being trafficked if they are poor or because of a high rate of unsafe migration, weak law enforcement, insufficient household income, ill-treatment and physical abuse at home and in the community, parental alcoholism, lack of food, and forced marriages. When children without birth registration and identity proof are trafficked tracing them becomes extremely difficult. In most of the countries in the region, birth registration is still difficult to obtain as seen by the fact that 36% of South Asia's children are unregistered at birth.

The governments of South Asia have committed themselves through ratification of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002) to tackle the issue. As part of a coordinated regional response, the governments have also committed to implement a SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) for effectively implementing the SAARC Convention.

Corporal Punishment

Violent punishment of children is now recognised as a human rights violation. The Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights Treaty Bodies systematically recommend prohibition of corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of punishment in all settings including the home/family. Explicit prohibition was also recommended by the UNSG's Study on Violence against Children. South Asian States committed to prohibiting all corporal punishment following the Study's 2005 regional consultation and the follow-up meeting in 2006.

Corporal punishment is widely practised at home and in schools, other institutions and penal systems for young people, as well as in situations of child labour. It remains socially accepted throughout the region, as it does in all regions of the world, except in the few countries where it has been prohibited and systematically challenged through sustained public, teacher and parent education. Corporal punishment in the form of hitting, slapping, kicking, beating, pulling hair, etc., and other forms of humiliating punishment are not as yet generally perceived as abusive. There is inadequate teacher training and parent education, promoting positive, non-violent forms of discipline.

The persisting legality and social approval of violent punishment is the most symbolic reflection of children's low status in societies, as possessions rather than individual people and rights-holders. Ending this legalised violence against children is not only a human rights imperative, it is also an essential strategy for reducing and eliminating all other forms of violence against children. No state can claim it has an effective child protection system while its laws still authorise and defend corporal punishment.

Child Labour

In South Asia, around 44 million or 13% of all children are involved in child labour. Economic exploitation is seen as one of the most common forms of violence in the region. Children often work long hours with little or no pay. There is a great deal of commonality across the South Asian countries in the forms of child labour, most notably in the areas of children in hazardous child labour, child domestic labour, children in export oriented industries, child bonded labour particularly in agriculture, and child labour in the informal economy, particularly in urban areas. Children not only face occupational hazards like handling heavy machineries or chemicals in their workplaces, but are also vulnerable and subjected to physical and sexual abuse. Additionally, these children are usually denied educational opportunities, which leads to a cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DOCUMENTS

International and Regional texts aimed at safeguarding the rights of the child and protecting children from violence

United Nations Treaties

- Convention on the Rights of the Child, GA Res. 44/25, annex, 44 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, UN Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force 2 September 1990
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, GA Res. 54/263, Annex I, 54 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 7, UN Doc. A/54/49, Vol. III (2000), entered into force 12 February 2002
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, GA Res. 54/263, Annex II, 54 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 6, UN Doc. A/54/49, Vol. III (2000), entered into force 18 January 2002
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966, entry into force 3 January 1976, in accordance with Article 27
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984, entry into force 26 June 1987, in accordance with Article 27.1
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Adopted by General Assembly resolution 2106 of 21 December 1965, entry into force 4 January 1969, in accordance with Article 19
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, adopted by General Assembly Resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, New York, 18 December 1979. Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Adopted by General Assembly Resolution 61/106 of 13 December 2006; entered into force May 2008
- Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO No. 182), 38 ILM 1207 (1999), entered into force 19 November 2000
- Convention concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Work (ILO 138), adopted on 26 June 1973; entered into force 19 June 1976
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000.
- UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967
- Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954
- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961

Hague Conference on Private International Law

- Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption (concluded on 29 May 1993, entered into force on 1 May 1995).

International Declarations/Agendas for Action/Guidelines

- The Rio de Janeiro Pact to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 3rd World Congress Against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, Rio de Janeiro, 25-28 November 2008
- “Violence against Children”, United Nations Secretary-General’s study, 29 August 2006
- The Yokohama Global Commitment adopted at the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Yokohama, Japan, 17-20 December 2001
- Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted at the 1st World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Stockholm, Sweden, 27-31 August 1996
- United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 1990
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (Tokyo Rules, 1990)
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules, 1985)
- “A World Fit for Children”, UN General Assembly outcome document adopted on 10 May 2002
- UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, A/HRC/11/L.13, 15 June 2009
- UN Common Approach to Justice for Children, March 2008

MDGs

- The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

SAARC Conventions and other documents

- SAARC Social Charter, 4 January, 2004.
- SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, January 2002.
- SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements on the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia, January 2002.
- The SAARC Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS.
- The SAARC Development Goals (SDGs)
- Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia, 10 July, 2009