



**South Asia Initiative To End Violence Against Children [SAIEVAC]
"IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHILDREN OF SAARC"**

**SUMMARY REPORT
OF
THE EXPERT GROUP MEETING TO REVIEW AND FINALIZE
THE REGIONAL ACTION PLAN
TO
END CHILD LABOUR**



Way Forward

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) after elaborate discussions and in keeping with the decisions of the past Governing Board Meetings endorsed the following steps to move the process for finalization of the Regional Action Plan.

1. The SRS will refine the RAP using the outputs of the 4 Group Exercises and circulate to the EGM participants to provide any additional comments within the context of the EGM discussions. The SRS will circulate this by the 18th of December with feedbacks solicited by the 9th of January 2016;
2. The SRS will also upload the draft RAP post EGM exercise on the SAIEVAC Website for wider access for feedback/comments;
3. The Member States who have any outstanding issues or reservations with any component of the RAP will be expected to provide them in writing, so that they can be further considered by the 6th GBM;
4. The RAP with incorporation of any additional inputs/comments with any outstanding issues as separate points will be tabled to the 6th Governing Board Meeting;
5. The SRS as recommended by the EGM will table the proposal to convene a wider stakeholder consultation on the issue of developing or adopting a SOP that can facilitate the SAIEVAC mechanisms for Cross Border Coordination and Collaboration. The SRS will also link with the SAIEVAC National mechanisms to collect the different SOPs that are currently in practice/use or in the process; and
6. The SRS will further refine the draft M&E Framework proposed by the EGM and table it to the 6th GBM with a proposed set of activities for its finalization post 6th GBM.

Summary Report

1. Background :

a) The Child Labour Context in South Asia

Child labour is a global phenomenon, but South Asia, which is home to some half-a-billion children – the largest child population of any region, also has a large number of children engaged in child labour and employment. According to recent ILO conservative estimates for South Asia,¹ based on national statistics, child labour for the 5-17 years age group is at almost 17 million, of which 5-14 year olds constitute over 10 million. Substantial variation in estimates exists across the South Asian countries. In absolute terms, India is at 5.8 million, followed by Bangladesh at 5 million, Pakistan at 3.4 million (10-17 year olds) and Nepal at 2 million. In relative terms, over one-quarter (26 per cent) of children in the 5-17 year age group are in child labour, making it a country where a child faces the highest risk, among the South Asian countries with estimates, of being in child labour. For this group, child labour is 15 per cent in Bhutan and 12 per cent each in Bangladesh and Pakistan. National statistics show vast numbers of “nowhere children,” whose numbers are captured neither in education nor in employment nor in a combination of the two. Millions of these statistically termed “idle” children are likely to be involved in child domestic labour, or to subjected to child marriage, trafficking or other forms of violence, and deprived of their rights to care, education, recreation, rest, and overall development.

The consequences and impacts of child labour are long lasting, and they impair children's physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being, as well as the economic and social development of the countries in the region and peace within communities.

In South Asia children are involved in the various forms labour and exploitative situations. This includes child domestic labour, hazardous work of various types, including in supply chains in export industries, bonded labour, to name only some. A substantial share of employment among 15-17 year olds is hazardous – over 75 per cent in Sri Lanka and over 70 per cent in Bangladesh.² Children are also victims of trafficking, uninformed rural-to-urban migration, conflict and suffer immensely from natural disasters, to which South Asian countries are prone. The children are engaged in this situation either by their family members, closed relatives, or family friends, traffickers, or through third party.

b) Towards a South Asia Response - SAIEVAC³

Governments of South Asian countries have committed to combating child labour through different legislative, policy and development measures. They have ratified/signed international and regional treaties on child rights and against child labour. Among these are ILO Conventions, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and its Optional Protocols. At the

¹ Khan & Lyon: *Measuring Children's Work in South Asia: Perspectives from national household surveys* (ILO and UCW, 2015) http://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_359371/lang-en/index.htm

² *Ibid* – the survey design in Bhutan, India and Pakistan do not allow for adequate data on this account – missing either working hours or industry.

³ <http://www.saievac.org/>

Regional level, the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has promoted Conventions on Child Welfare Combating Trafficking of Women and Children for Prostitution.⁴

At its Third Governing Board Meeting (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 31 May 2012), the SAIEVAC GB Members endorsed the suggestion for a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding with the ILO on child labour/child, which was signed by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and the ILO in August 2012.

The Third GB Meeting also entrusted the SAIEVAC Secretariat Regional Secretariat with the task of formulating a comprehensive regional Child Labour Project, which, it asked to be submitted to the GB Member from India to explore possible funding.

The MOU resulted in a number of collaborative activities, including the organization of a course in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children (SRSG VAC) on bringing synergy between the reporting and action on CRC and ILO Child Labour Conventions. It was successfully organized and included participation of SAIEVAC National Mechanisms SAARC Law, and ECPAT – an SACG member, together with a number of officials of the Ministries of Labour and social partners and child labour experts, including the ILO and Office of the SRSG VAC. Furthermore, the ILO has consistently participated in the SAIEVAC Regional Technical Consultations, provided technical support on the issue of child labour and promoted the integration of the issue into the wider framework of Violence against Children (VAC). In 2013, the ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific and Assistant Director-General, participated in the inaugural session of the SAIEVAC Technical Consultation (Thimpu, Bhutan, September 2013).

The SAIEVAC Director-General briefed the SAARC Second Meeting on Child Labour,⁵ and a representative of the SAARC Secretariat also spoke on the occasion. The SAIEVAC DG participated at the Knowledge Sharing and Technical Consultation (New Delhi, India, 2014), and welcomed the first South Asia Report on child labour and children's employment, *Children's Work – Perspectives from South Asia's National Surveys*. The Outcomes of Third Global Conference on Child Labour (Brazil, October 2013) were presented at the meeting. The SAIEVAC GB Member from Afghanistan, representing his country in the Brazil Conference, also took the opportunity to highlight the work of the SAIEVAC. Within the SAARC countries, the SAIEVAC national coordinators (senior government officials) and civil society members participate in ILO events and vice versa, thereby increasing opportunities for collaboration and coherence.

In 2013-14, the ILO served as Chair of the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG) – a multi-agency UN/INGO group with which the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat signed a partnership agreement in 2012. As the SACG Chair, the ILO also served as SAIEVAC GB Member. This further strengthened collaboration with the SACG on child labour.

The Strategy is in line with the SAIEVAC Five-year Work Plan. The SAIEVAC Work plan addresses 14 Strategic Objectives, all of which have relevance for child labour and its worst forms.

⁴ <http://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/child-labour/legal-framework/lang--en/index.htm>

⁵ Organized by the Government of India in collaboration with the ILO and the National Labour Institute (New Delhi, India, 2013),

More specifically, the priorities of the Issue Based Action section, identify as priority themes: Trafficking (4.2); Sexual abuse and exploitation (4.3); and Child Labour (4.5).

The Strategy is also in line with the SAARC Conventions and commitments on Children and ILO Conventions No.138 on Minimum Age to Employment (ratified by the seven ILO Member States in South Asia), Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour (ratified by five of the seven Member States), and the UNCRC, ratified by all SAARC countries.

Moreover, many of the NACGs have identified child labour among their top priorities and are looking to enhance action and advocacy. In India, where the NACG has a membership of some 500 NGOs/CBOs and trade unions, child labour has been identified as a thematic priority.

The Strategy and Plan of Action are also responsive to the framework of cooperation between SAIEVAC and ILO for children of South Asia.

Goal and Objectives of the SAIEVAC Regional Strategy and Plan of Action against Child Labour⁶

The overall goal of the Strategy Plan is to prevent and eliminate all forms of child labour with a priority on the worst forms and the special situation of girls and excluded or vulnerable populations in order to ensure children's rights and end violence against children in South Asia. It is expected that the Strategy will be implemented through initiatives identified in the Plan of Action.

The objectives are intended to facilitate the results by the countries through collaboration with concerned line agencies and other stakeholders:

1. Universal ratification of core international treaties, legal/policy reform related to child labour and effective implementation.
2. Realization of right to education and appropriate skill training.
3. Integration/mainstreaming of child labour issues into key national and regional development agendas and policies.
4. Scaling up and replication of effective re-integration and social protection schemes for children involved in or vulnerable to all forms of child labour and their families with the multi-agency coordination and a coherent system.
5. Improved knowledge and evidence-based data collection on child labour in order to understand and clarify concepts/operational indicators.
6. Adequate institutional capacities of specific target groups with an aim to improving, achieving and sustaining positive results to end child labour in the region
7. Effective coordination, implementation and monitoring mechanisms through strengthening capacity of institutions in support of eliminating child labour at both regional and national levels.

Approach and Methodology

- Desk Review and Mapping - Regional and National
- Capacity Building of the implementing agencies - Regional and National
- Engagement with Parliamentarians Caucus (Regional and National level)

⁶ The Strategy as endorsed by SAIEVAC Governing Board Members at the 4th Governing Board Meeting is attached.

- Engagement with Media (Regional and National level)
- Child Participation and Children's views in media (Regional and National level)
- Laws and policy
 - Harmonization at the Regional level
 - Child Labour and Right to Education
 - Rescue, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (RRR) of the children
 - Standard Operating Procedures on RRR of the children
 - Optional Protocol on SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution
- SAIEVAC Management Information System and data collection on Child Labour issues.
- SAIEVAC Human Resource Development

c) Meeting of Experts on Child Labour

The Meeting of Experts is a continuation of partnership between SAIEVAC and ILO. In 2012, the ILO and SAIEVAC signed an MOU on child labour/child rights and the same year, SAIEVAC and SACG signed a Partnership Agreement to streamline SACG agency support to SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and its national mechanisms. The South Asia Strategy against Child Labour endorsed by the SACG was initiated in 2013 spearheaded by the ILO and WVI. The SAIEVAC Strategy Paper was put forth at the 4th GBM in 2013 and further endorsed by the 5th Governing Board Meeting in Dhaka in 2014. As directed by the 5th GBM a detail Project Proposal has also been tabled to the SAIEVAC Governing Board Member, Government of India in August 2015.

The Meeting of the Experts Group was convened from the 8-9th of December in Colombo, Srilanka with the following objectives and Expected Outcome:

Objectives

- 1) To review, refine and finalise the Regional Action Plan to End Child Labour in South Asia;
- 2) To assess existing initiatives in addressing/combating child labour in South Asia; and
- 3) To map out potential partners/collaboration to operationalize the Regional Action Plan

Expected Outputs

- 1) Regional Action Plan to End Child Labour in South Asia
- 2) Experience sharing on innovative initiatives to address child labour
- 3) Mapping of potential partners (including funding agencies) to implement the Regional Action Plan
- 4) Linkages identified within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

d) Participants: The Meeting was attended by selected representatives from the SAIEVAC National Mechanisms, Ministries of Labour, SAARC Secretariat, NACGs⁷, UN/INGOs, and other Regional Partners are expected to participate.

e) Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM):

1. The Inaugural Session of the EGM was presided over by the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs.

The inaugural Session saw the presentation of the following agenda items:

- Message of the Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat, on the occasion of the 31st SAARC Charter Day;
- Brief Introduction on the Expert Group Meeting on the Regional Action Plan to End Child Labour;
- ILO South Asia Report on Child Labour - key findings and recommendations and Linkages of SDGs and Child Labour;
- Inaugural Remarks by the Chief Guest

2. Business Session:

The Business Session of the EGM covered the following agenda items:

2.1 Addressing Child Labour through Mainstreaming: Emerging Best Practices from IPEC Programmes in Nepal and Sri Lanka;

The District Secretary of Colombo shared the Srilanka Experience. In his presentation he covered the following areas:

The presentation of the Nepal experience was introduced by Mr. Barun Kumar Jha, Director, Ministry of Labour, GoN

Ms. Bipina Sharma, ILO Nepal, shared the main Nepal project experience. In her presentation she covered the following:

2.2. Introducing the Regional Action Plan and the Implementation Strategy;

The DG SRS introduced the RAP by elaborating on the past processes undertaken and inputs by the Member States. He also elaborated the objectives of the EGM and what he hopes can be achieved at the end of the EGM.

2.3 Group Works

The participants in 4 Groups over one and half days addressed the review and refinement of the RAP.

⁷ National Action and Coordinating Groups on Action against Violence against Children

3. Closing Session:

The Closing Session of the EGM was graced by the Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, Government of Srilanka who is also the SAIEVAC Governing Board Member, Srilanka

4. Way Forward:

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