

Yokohama Commitments- Promises Kept, Promises Forgotten

South Asia Implementation
of the Yokohama Global
Commitment 2001



Yokohama Commitments – Promises Kept, Promises Forgotten

South Asia Implementation of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001¹

The phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children has come to the world's attention increasingly in recent years. Today, all regions of the globe are affected to a lesser or greater extent and the South Asian region is no exception. The problem has become more complex due to its pervasive and varied nature - it permeates not only national settings but transnational settings as well. It is compounded by various taboos and negative traditional practices on the one hand, and modernistic forms of exploitation due to the advance of technology on the other.

For this reason, in 1996, the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was convened in Stockholm, Sweden. Its primary emphasis was to concentrate world attention and action against commercial sexual exploitation of children, i.e., child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes. While the accent was placed on 'commercial' sexual exploitation, underpinned by global concerns about sex tourism afflicting

children in many countries, South Asian participants at the Congress also raised the issue of sexual abuse, citing various non-commercial situations such as domestic violence and abuse in the home and community setting, such as early marriage.

The First World Congress adopted the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action. It called for more cooperation between states and other actors, and advocated the need to criminalise the phenomenon. It urged the world community to adopt laws, policies and practices to protect children and to create a climate through education, social mobilisation and development activities which would enable parents and other actors to protect children. It also established key targets, including those set out below.

1. Coordination/Cooperation:

- at the national level, the establishment/identification of national plans of action (NPAs) with relevant indicators of progress and databases on the issue by the year 2000;

¹ This report is a consolidation of the responses by government and non-governmental organizations of the eight countries in South Asia to the questionnaire evolved by the "South Asia Coordinating Group Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women".

- at the national level, the establishment/ identification of national focal points against commercial sexual exploitation by the year 2000;
- at the regional and international levels, cooperation between key agencies; and
- implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in full.

2. Prevention:

- provide children with access to education and other basic necessities;
- maximise education on child rights and promote gender-sensitive information campaigns;
- implement economic policies to assist children;
- review, develop and implement laws, policies and programmes to prevent commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- mobilise the cooperation of the business sector; and
- promote ethical media action.

3. Protection:

- develop laws, policies and programmes to protect children and prohibit the commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- develop laws against child sex tourism, including laws to tackle the extra-territorial aspects of the issue;
- with regard to child sexual trafficking, adopt laws to protect children and penalise the traffickers, while treating the children humanely under national immigration laws;
- strengthen cooperation among law enforcement agencies and other actors; and
- create safe havens for children escaping from sexual exploitation.

4. Recovery/reintegration:

- adopt a non-punitive approach towards child victims;

- provide social, medical, psychological and other support;
- train relevant personnel;
- prevent and remove societal stigmatisation of child victims, and facilitate recovery and reintegration, while ensuring that institutionalisation is for the shortest period possible (if it is needed at all);
- promote alternative means of livelihood and support for families; and
- carry out sanctions against adult perpetrators as well as adopting relevant psychological measures for behavioural change.

5. Child participation:

- promote child participation in preventing and protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation; and
- support child-to-child networks as advocates of child rights.

As a follow up to the 1996 Congress, the Second World Congress took place in Yokohama, Japan in 2001. Prior to the Congress, several regions of the globe organised consultations to prepare their contributions, as well as to specify their positions and priorities from the relevant regional perspectives. The South Asian region hosted a meeting in Dhaka and adopted the South Asia Strategy against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. The strategy hinges on the following priorities (inter alia):

1. Protection measures:

- call for all South Asian countries to develop, over the next two years, NPAs on the issue where they are not already in place, and to implement them.

2. Laws/Implementation:

- ratify the CRC and ensure that the age of protection against commercial sexual

exploitation and sexual abuse of children should be the same as under the CRC (under 18);

- develop an adequate legal framework consistent with international instruments, such as the CRC, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols.
- develop child-friendly legal procedures, birth and marriage registration, cooperation against perpetrators from foreign countries, relevant training, non-penalisation of the child, monitoring, and simplification of legal processes;
- seek the signature/ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No.182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

3. Preventive measures:

- maximise early childhood development and compulsory quality primary education, and second-chance learning to improve children's status, especially girls;
- support gender-sensitive media campaigns;
- build economic safety nets and invest in community-based initiatives; and
- advocate local governance structures to mainstream child protection.

4. Recovery/reintegration:

- help the child victim, regardless of his/her origin; and
- create and strengthen community support services and health facilities.

5. Collaboration, coordination and capacity-building:

- follow up the Stockholm Agenda for Action and Yokohama Commitment;
- establish national focal points to help follow-up;
- institutionalise a process for regional actions through consultations;
- establish national and regional databases;
- advocate improved birth registration; and
- motivate the private sector, build linkages between international and national agencies and build the capacity of government functionaries.

6. Create partnerships with children and young adults:

- enable the inclusion of children and young adults in networks and processes;
- enhance the capacities of children and adults by learning from children's experiences; and
- sensitise adults and improve access to information on the issue.

While the South Asia Strategy complemented the Stockholm Agenda and fulfilled the aim of preparing for the Yokohama Congress, it also had a strong regional accent:

- the South Asia Strategy covers not only sexual exploitation of children but also sexual abuse affecting them;
- the strategy highlights the plight of the girl child, especially as gender discrimination is a major challenge for the region;
- the strategy adds various necessary actions such as birth and marriage registration, also a major concern in the region.

Thus the South Asia Strategy has 'value-added' in that it underlines specific concerns in the region, in addition to global concerns.

Pursuant to the adoption of the South Asia Strategy, the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children adopted the Yokohama Global Commitment as the instrument to follow up the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action. In adopting the Commitment, the Congress was particularly influenced by two developments that became more pronounced after the Stockholm World Congress.

First, child trafficking for sexual and other purposes grew tragically more common in many parts of the world, often across borders. This became far more visible after the Stockholm Congress. Second, the spread of technology, particularly computerisation and the Internet, accentuated the child pornography problem due to the exponential growth of computer-linked child pornography. The Yokohama Congress tried to deal with these issues more concretely than before. The Congress was also aware that one of the missing links at the Stockholm Congress was broad-based participation from the private/business sector. Thus it endeavoured to open the door to more private sector participation.

As a result of the Second World Congress, the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001 was adopted. It re-emphasised the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action with the following tenets (inter alia):

- a call for more effective implementation of the CRC;
- encourage early ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and ILO Convention No.182;
- recommit to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action;
- reinforce efforts against commercial sexual exploitation of children, in particular by addressing root causes such as poverty and criminality;

- promote closer networking between government and non-government actors;
- ensure adequate resource allocation;
- build on regional/sub-regional and national agendas and monitoring;
- address negative aspects of new technologies, in particular child pornography on the Internet, while recognising the potential for new technologies to protect children;
- reaffirm the importance of the family and strengthen social protection of children through awareness raising and community-based surveillance/monitoring; and
- promote cooperation at all levels.

It is three years since the South Asian Strategy and the Yokohama Global Commitment were adopted. It is now an appropriate time to take stock of developments and review progress and impediments.

Regional Progress

For this study, assessment of regional progress (especially since the adoption of the South Asia Strategy and the Yokohama Global Commitment) has been assisted particularly by the formulation of, and responses to, a questionnaire evolved by the "South Asia Co-ordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women" sent to both the governmental and non-governmental sectors in the South Asian region. In essence, the questionnaire asks the respondents to assess the extent to which the South Asia Strategy has been implemented, based upon the structure set by the Stockholm Agenda for Action and re-emphasised by the Yokohama Global Commitment. The components are: coordination/cooperation; prevention; protection; recovery/reintegration; and children's participation. An analysis of the current situation is set out below.

Coordination/Cooperation

Although estimates suggest that child sexual exploitation and abuse have been on the increase since the Stockholm Congress, one should not be daunted by the situation. There has been welcome progress in a number of areas.

First, there has been more openness among governments in addressing the issue, and governments have been carrying out dialogue and constructive cooperation with non-governmental organisations and inter-governmental organisations on many fronts. In several countries, the work of governments and NGOs has complemented each another in the spirit of the Stockholm and Yokohama instruments and the South Asia Strategy.

For example, the Bangladeshi Government's reply to the questionnaire for this study notes constructive cooperation between the government, civil society and children:

"Following phases were done (sic): (i) preparation of a background paper on "good practices and priorities to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Bangladesh"; (ii) Eight rounds of consultations with 8 groups of children aged 10-17 years who either had direct experience of sexual exploitation and/or trafficking, or who were considered vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation; and (iii) consultations with (a) wide range of stakeholders in three divisional cities of Bangladesh (Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshani) and a National Consultation in Dhaka. The outputs of the consultations and research were incorporated in the first draft of the National Plan of Action (NPA), which was shared with a wider group of stakeholders from Government ministries and departments and civil society in a National Consultation in Dhaka."

In all countries, there has been some networking between the government, NGOs and children at the national and/or community level to protect children. At the field level, cooperation between governments and NGOs has led to the rescue of children from human trafficking, e.g., in Nepal. In India, there is key networking between an array of government agencies, other entities, NGOs, the media and academic institutions, including the National Commission on Women, the National Commission on Human Rights, and the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development.

On another cooperative front, there has been some progress in developing NPAs against child sexual exploitation and abuse. With regard to the target of each country having an NPA to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse within two years of the South Asia Strategy, India, Nepal and Bangladesh do have specific plans of action on child sexual exploitation and abuse. The Maldives has a general NPA on children, while the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) in Sri Lanka has developed a plan of action which may also be used to cover the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Pakistan and Afghanistan are in the process of developing general NPAs. Bhutan has yet to initiate the process of developing an NPA.

Concerning the need for a national focal point at present all South Asian countries have a national agency or group of ministries that can act as a focal point against child sexual abuse and exploitation. There are also various human rights mechanisms to help protect children, including national human rights commissions and a children's commissioner, depending on the country.

Concerning cooperation with international standards, each country in South Asia is party to the CRC. A growing number are also joining other international treaties regarding CSEC. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are now party to the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children and ILO Convention No.182. Nepal and Pakistan have signed the Optional Protocol and have ratified ILO Convention No.182.

Regionally, with the exception of Afghanistan, all the South Asian countries have participated in the formulation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution 2002, and the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia 2002. Recently, the same countries adopted the SAARC Social Charter 2004, which advocates more active social programmes, including access to schools and poverty eradication. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to help ensure the safe return of child victims of trafficking are being explored in relation to Nepal-India and Bangladesh-India.

On the information front, countries have been improving their data and monitoring to some extent, although systematic national databases are still lacking in most countries. A database on child trafficking from Iran to Afghanistan is being developed, although Afghanistan does still lack a comprehensive database.

Research is sometimes being undertaken by NGOs, e.g., on child trafficking in Nepal. Often the research is stimulated by intergovernmental organisations such as UNICEF and ILO. Interestingly, the reply by an NGO to the questionnaire in relation to Pakistan lists a whole

range of publications varying from a study on the exposure of children to pornography at Internet cafés to trafficking of children in South Asia and within Pakistan.

In the Government of India's response to the questionnaire, various government agencies and other national bodies such as the National Commission on Human Rights and the National Commission on Women have undertaken research on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. In cooperation with UNICEF, the Government has supported the preparation of the following studies and manuals:

- Rescue and Rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation - A Report
- Anti-trafficking Initiatives of the States of India - A Database
- Judicial Handbook on Trafficking of Women and Children for Commercial Sexual Exploitation
- Manual for Medical Officers Dealing with Medico-Legal Cases of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
- Manual for Social Workers

Steps are being taken towards making a more systematic database, as follows.

"The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, is committed to putting into place a system for obtaining data from various relevant Ministries/Departments of the Government of India, State Governments and Union Territories regarding budget allocations and trends related to schemes and programmes addressing all children's issues. This would be in addition to the statistical data presently being obtained by the Government of India, such as the Census of India, National Sample Survey Organisation...

Apart from the above, the relevant Ministry/ Department and State Government keep a database on the number of beneficiaries under each scheme/programme."

In the Maldives, a study on child sexual abuse is being prepared.

In Nepal, CRC monitoring indicators have been developed and a database is being established. In Sri Lanka, the NCPA has been involved with the preparation of a whole series of research studies on the issue. Tele dramas have been staged, and a situational analysis of child sex tourism in Sri Lanka has been prepared with NGO partners. The NCPA is in the process of creating a database and it has recorded all the cases prosecuted at the lower court level. Bhutan is interested in developing indicators once its National Commission on Women and Children is fully functional.

An interesting challenge is to what extent the private sector has been brought on board to cooperate in action to protect children. While this is only nascent in many countries, the reply from an NGO in Pakistan notes that the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority has developed a Code of Conduct for Internet Cafés, and this interlinks with Internet service providers and café owners in four major cities of Pakistan.

In Bangladesh, policy makers are also interlinking with Internet service providers on the issue of child pornography on the Internet. The World Tourism Organisation has presented its Code of Conduct there and it has cooperated with the Government on child protection. In Nepal, the National Tourism Board has undertaken an awareness programme on paedophilia, sex

tourism and child pornography. In Sri Lanka, the NCPA has cooperated with Interpol to track paedophile action with regard to computer-related child pornography. The Tourism Board holds discussions with the tourism industry on the issue.

Mechanisms for child protection are being established. In Afghanistan, a committee to counter child trafficking was formed in 2003 by a presidential decree. A child protection network has also been formed between local NGOs and INGOs. A National Commission on Women and Children has been set up in Bhutan to act as the focal point on child rights. In Bangladesh, there is a network of ministries working on the issue, while in India there is the National Human Rights Commission as well as other national entities.

In the Maldives, a National Council for the Rights of Children has been established. In Nepal, the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Children has been set up, and this is complemented by district task forces against trafficking in children and women in 26 districts. In Sri Lanka, the NCPA is the key mechanism on the issue and district child protection committees have also been formed. A key challenge is that although the NCPA has formulated a national plan of action, it is not yet in force. In Pakistan, the national focal point is the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development.

Training programmes have been organised for government officials on child protection, e.g., in relation to child trafficking in Afghanistan and with regard to the National Plan of Action in Bangladesh. Training modules on the issue have also been developed in India to train government personnel, which have involved NGOs in the process.

Prevention

Various programmes aiming to prevent child sexual exploitation or abuse have been started in many countries. The most significant improvement is probably the fact that all countries place great emphasis on access to free and compulsory education, with particular attention to the plight of the girl child. There are many programmes aimed at poverty alleviation as well as to enable families to sustain their families, thus preventing children from falling into the trap of the sex market.

The Afghan Constitution provides for free and compulsory education for all children until the secondary level (Article 43). Some 4.2 million children went to school in 2003 after the period of intense armed conflict, and a new curriculum was introduced. There were also awareness raising programmes through mosques and the media on issues such as child trafficking, even though sexual trafficking is perhaps not a major problem in the country.

In Afghanistan, activities to provide safety nets to protect children and help generate income and self-reliance now include:

- the setting up of child well-being committees in 40 communities to promote awareness of child protection, about half of which are staffed by women;
- the formation of children's peer groups to promote child rights;
- vocational training for children, income generation centres for women;
- the setting up of community development councils to foster local development;
- livelihood programmes to foster social protection of vulnerable groups,
- the formation of a committee on anti-child trafficking in one province;

- the setting up of children's centres in some provinces.

The Bangladeshi Government's reply to the questionnaire identifies different developments in the field of prevention, as follows.

1. Raising awareness on protection of children to reduce the vulnerability of adolescent girls to sexual abuse/exploitation, trafficking and early marriage.
2. The provision of life skills-based education to adolescents by several NGOs. They have included messages on protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, and have strengthened a participatory approach and/or peer education in their programmes.
3. Building capacity on 'child rights'; creating protection against sexual abuse and exploitation of adolescents, especially girls working through peer education; and providing participatory life skills-based education.
4. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, with the support of NGOs through the Kishori Abhijan project, reach 52,000 unmarried adolescent girls attending secondary school and 1500 adolescent boys in 14 districts throughout the country. Girls are receiving education on topics ranging from HIV/AIDS awareness, sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking, to critical thinking and negotiation skills and gender issues, and livelihood and economic skills training."

There has been an awareness raising campaign with the use of a drama series called "Meena", and there has been training of journalists on the issue. There is emphasis on promoting self-reliance in adolescent girls through occupational training and making credit available for poverty reduction

activities. Committees on the suppression of violence against women and children have been set up at the district level, and government agencies and NGOs cooperate to provide facilities such as drop-in centres.

The Bhutanese Government's reply to the questionnaire highlights various strategies to increase girls' enrolment at all levels, including through the establishment of community schools. The country aims to make the entire population literate by 2012, with the help of non-formal education in the following manner:

- the current practice of using existing space and teachers in primary schools during the evenings will continue to expand the literacy programme;
- a non-formal education programme will form part of the pre-service teacher-training programme - teachers will be required to become non-formal education instructors as well whenever required;
- non-formal education policies will be developed to establish a system of continuing education that will co-exist with the formal education system;
- post-literacy support will be provided through community-based initiatives such as community resource centres and community learning centres.

These goes hand in hand with community-based activities and empowerment through knowledge, income generation, credit programmes, self-reliance and decentralisation.

Importantly, India amended her Constitution in 2002 to make primary education free and compulsory (93rd Constitution Amendment Bill). There is a key move to universalise access to elementary education for 6-14 year olds. There are a number of advocacy programmes on child

rights, such as those being implemented through the media, and the promotion of ethical media in profiling children has been assisted by the Supreme Court of India which has issued guidelines for a code of conduct for the public portrayal of child victims of abuse and exploitation.

Various safety nets and income generating activities can be seen from the Indian Government's reply to the questionnaire, as set out below.

1. "Empowerment through knowledge - A large number of self-help groups have been formed under the Swa-Shakti and Swayamsiddha programmes. These... help in building economic safety nets and invest in community-based initiatives to strengthen the economic security of poor and marginalised families and offer viable alternative sources of sustainable livelihoods, especially for women headed households."
2. "Bakika Samriddhi Yojana - The objective of the Scheme is to (i) change negative family and community attitudes towards the girl child at birth and towards the mother; (ii) improve enrolment and retention of girl children in schools; (iii) raise the age of marriage of girls...to assist the girl in undertaking income generating activities."
3. "Swawlamban (NORAD) Scheme - The objective is to provide training and skills to women to facilitate them in obtaining employment or self-employment on a sustained basis. The target group under the scheme are poor and needy women and women from weaker sections of society, such as scheduled castes ..."
4. "Kishori Shakti Yojana - The schemes for adolescent girls focus on school drop-out girls of age 11-18 years and schemes attempt to meet the nutrition, health,

education, literacy, recreational and skill development needs of adolescent girls..."

More budgetary allocations on child-related issues are visible, while training of officials on the issue of trafficking and the promotion of integrated child development services are also being implemented.

There is parallel emphasis in the Maldives and Nepal to ensure children's access, particularly girls' access, to education. There are also media activities and advocacy and awareness raising programmes to prevent exploitation and abuse of children. Meanwhile, skills' training helps to generate income, as well as credit facilities. Nepal has also set up a Poverty Alleviation Fund, and has a variety of village committees acting as watchdogs against child exploitation.

In Pakistan, prevention programmes include education for all, in both formal and non-formal education. There are also mass awareness programmes, and a Code of Ethics has been developed for journalists. The economic safety nets include a poverty alleviation fund and micro-credit projects. There are some child protection committees at the local level.

In Sri Lanka, there is emphasis on compulsory and free education for all, coupled with a variety of media activities including TV programmes, posters, drama and cartoons on child abuse and child labour. The safety nets which the Sri Lankan Government has put in place mirror those noted above with regard to poverty alleviation and income generation. Child protection committees at the district level assist with community vigilance.

Protection

In addition to the presence of NPAs in some countries, all countries have, or are developing, a legal structure that can be used to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. For instance, Afghanistan is now drafting a Juvenile Code. It has placed great emphasis on birth registration and plans to increase awareness of the need to register marriages. There has also been some training of law enforcers.

In Bangladesh, the NPA provides guidance for action on child protection. This is complemented by a variety of laws. There has been key reform with the passage of the Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act in 2003 to specifically address sexual abuse, exploitation and dowry-related violence in Bangladesh. There has also been much emphasis on birth and marriage registration. An MOU is now being prepared with India with regard to cross-border trafficking. There is an awareness-raising campaign covering law enforcers such as judges and the police. One-stop services are available in some areas to provide medical treatment to victims.

Bhutan has a variety of laws which can be used to protect children, e.g., the Penal Code. Birth and marriage registration is also provided for by law, but the country does not yet have specific institutions to provide counselling and care to child victims.

In India, protection measures are largely guided by the 1998 Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children. Measures to be taken and those already in place include the following:

- the setting up of a central advisory committee on child prostitution;

- a State Advisory Committee on Child Prostitution in every state;
- the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956 to be amended;
- a number of laws are also on the books to help protect children, e.g., the Indian Penal Code and the Juvenile Justice Care and Protection of Children Act 2000;
- laws are now being changed to define the child as a person under 18 years old;
- there is an active judiciary, including the Supreme Court, which helps to protect children;
- there is also emphasis on birth registration;
- training and dissemination have also taken place.

In the Maldives, action is guided by the general NPA, while key laws are being amended to raise the legal age of the child to 18. A child protection unit has been established with the police, while some counselling is available for victims. There is also emphasis on birth and marriage registration. Meanwhile, Nepal is guided by its specific national plan against trafficking in children and women for sexual and labour exploitation. There is a national task force, coupled with district task forces, on the issue. The legal structure exists to some extent to protect children, principally the Children's Code 1992, but there are reforms being considered in relation to domestic violence and trafficking. There has been some training for law enforcers and there are projects to improve the juvenile justice system. There is also a campaign to promote birth and marriage registration. In terms of law enforcement across countries, there are also extradition agreements with different countries, in addition to the SAARC Conventions above.

In Pakistan, there is a broad legal framework, including the Penal Code, which can be used to

protect children. Interestingly in 2003, 78 child-related laws were reviewed but none of them have been revised. While there exists an ordinance to counter trafficking, it has yet to be amended to cover internal trafficking. It also does not yet stipulate child-friendly procedures. There are already laws on marriage and birth registration, while some activities are being undertaken to promote registration. Interestingly, the country does not yet have bilateral cross-border agreements on child protection, despite its participation in the SAARC framework.

In Sri Lanka the thrust of the action is shaped by the NPA of the NCPA, but it is yet to come into force. There are, however, many laws which can be used to promote child protection, including the Penal Code. There have been steps to introduce child-friendly procedures, such as the establishment of juvenile courts to deal with children in conflict with the law and those in need of care and protection. More counselling is being promoted, while birth and marriage registration is also underlined. There has been cooperation between national law enforcers and Interpol, while with the help of UNICEF there has been training of not only government officials, but also members of dissident groups.

Generally, countries do not lack a legal structure to protect children. However, quality implementation/enforcement is another matter.

Recovery/Reintegration

Experience from the South Asian region indicates a variety of initiatives on recovery and/or reintegration from both the government and non-governmental sectors. These include programmes to rescue children, shelters to protect them from immediate harm, and actions to enable children to reintegrate into society safely.

Legal aid, assistance, and shelter for victims are available in Pakistan; while in Bangladesh, government agencies and NGOs are working together to provide shelters and counselling for child victims of trafficking with government officials being trained to become caregivers. One-stop centres have also been established to grant safety to child victims and to give them access to medical treatment. In Sri Lanka too, childcare centres are available, and there is an anti-trafficking surveillance unit at the NCPA with a multi-disciplinary team to counter the trafficking phenomenon.

Nepal has some interesting actions, including transit home set up by NGOs, the establishment of women's and children's service centres by the police, joint cross-border committees, and referral networks with caregivers.

India has several programmes to promote the recovery and reintegration of child victims, especially in the context of trafficking. These include the provision of shelter, counselling, education and skills improvement, and medical and legal support.

India has also adopted video conferencing facilities for trial, so that children do not get exposed to traffickers and other associated trauma.

The use of the courts system to initiate public interest litigation, whereby concerned members of the public can take action in court to help protect children, even though those members are not directly the victims, has been tried in Bangladesh. One NGO filed a court case at the end of 2003 on the basis that, " the Bangladesh Government has ratified the CRC and CEDAW. Sothe Government should honour this convention in all aspects".

In Afghanistan, activities are just starting to develop on this front. Some counselling is provided to children who are deported back to Afghanistan. Training on social work to help the recovery and reintegration process is projected for the future.

While health services are free in Bhutan, there do not yet exist specific strategies to promote the recovery and reintegration of child victims. Activities on this front in the Maldives are also only just beginning.

Children's Participation

A positive development is that children's participation in activities against sexual exploitation and abuse has become much more acceptable in the region, at least in principle. A number of children's clubs have been formed as forums for child participation. Some have offered peer help to others who have been affected by sexual exploitation and abuse.

In Bangladesh, there have been many consultations with children, and these are complemented by life skills training for adolescents and adults, as well as awareness raising on the threat of HIV/AIDS. A national children's task force has been formed, and peer education has been promoted, training children to train others. In Afghanistan, too, children's peer groups have been formed, and there have been some awareness raising campaigns in which children have participated, including several children's consultations, sometimes linked with the media.

In India, child participation is part and parcel of many NGO activities ranging from protection to rescue and reintegration. The visual media is

involved and children increasingly take part in information campaigns. In the Maldives, there are school boards of young people who are seen as 'change makers' and mobilise other children. A training package for children is also being prepared.

In Nepal, the NPA was drafted with the help of children themselves. Children's clubs are present in several areas while children are also represented in various forums. In Pakistan, there have been some consultations with children, but their participation has yet to be incorporated into national policies. Some material on child rights is available in schools. It is hoped that action will be taken to integrate child participation into programming in Bhutan.

- The Sri Lankan Government's response to the questionnaire indicates that they too have moved ahead in the area of children's participation. Children have been involved in helping to formulate the NPA, child protection committees involving children have been set up in schools, a 'children's parliament' has been set up as an advisory body, children's clubs have been set up and peer counseling encouraged.

It is clear that South Asian countries have taken many bold and innovative steps towards promoting child participation in preventing and protecting children from commercial sexual exploitation; and supporting child-to-child networks as advocates of child rights.

Implementation Challenges

Although progress has been made on several fronts in the South Asian region, the key issue is effective implementation. This is tested critically by the following challenges, as set out below.

Varied Contexts

Any attempt to assess the effectiveness of actions against child sexual exploitation and abuse in the South Asian region should be cognisant of the socioeconomic, cultural and political context behind the problem. At least three countries from the region - Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal - have suffered the consequences of armed conflicts in recent years. Fighting is still taking place in some parts of the region, and this evident lack of peace in some settings obviously hampers attempts to protect children generally.

There is also the poverty issue that wreaks havoc in many parts of the region. However, the issue should not be taken out of context. Poverty itself should not be used to justify child sexual exploitation and abuse. It is noteworthy that there are many poor communities that protect children well and it is regrettable that there are many rich communities, including those in developed countries, which protect children inadequately.

Intrinsically linked with the poverty issue is the national budget, and to what extent it is spent on social issues and child protection. Several parts of the South Asian region have been spending inordinate amounts on armaments and militarisation rather than on human development and child protection. It is thus incomplete to complain about lack of resources when some resources are already available but are allocated in an unbalanced manner. More resources should be reallocated from the military sector to the humanity sector. Interestingly, in the replies to the questionnaire sent out for this study, very little information was provided by the respondents on the budget issue. This needs to be explored further in terms of transparency and comparative peer analysis.

There is also the issue of democracy in the region. While the region can be proud of being home to several democracies, there are also corners of the region which are not yet democratic. This impedes the full realisation of human rights and child rights, as they are intertwined with the need for democracy. For instance, a key linchpin of child participation is a democratic approach. A full realisation of child participation is unlikely in settings where power is not shared. There also is also the danger that child participation is more likely to be of a token nature in the latter setting.

Then there is the governance issue. The lack of transparency and corruption in some settings are key impediments to child protection. This affects both the public and private sectors, and it raises the question of how to improve both the style and substance of governance, including capacity building of public officials, in order to fight corruption. This is linked to the issue of incentives, as dealt with below.

The cultural context also has to be taken into account, where sexual problems are taboo and where there is widespread discrimination against the girl child, in addition to caste and class problems, which particularly affect the children of minorities and indigenous peoples. This is linked with various negative traditional practices such as the sale of children and early marriage. With regard to the emerging issue of domestic violence, this is a sensitive issue in all countries, not only in South Asia. Domestic violence has traditionally been seen as a private matter, the challenge now lies in bringing it out into the open, and treating it as a public matter - as is now the international position.

Behind cultural perceptions, one also has to deal sensitively with religion and religious leaders. Have liberal religious/spiritual leaders been invited to address the issue of child protection? Have

outreach programmes tried to negotiate with those leaders who are not liberal? This issue is linked with the fact that many countries have several legal systems - sometimes 'civil law', and sometimes, religious law. This complicates matters in terms of child protection, as some religious laws are not liberal enough on this issue.

In such a context, one can understand why it is difficult to protect children. Yet this understanding itself should be seen as a window of opportunity to do more to help rather than to take a passive attitude. What is needed is good practice from the region. The replies to the questionnaire from both government and non-government sectors show that many encouraging initiatives are visible. The context thus depends much upon leadership and political commitment to do more, and not less, for children.

Scope, Scale and Quality of Programmes

Many of the replies to the questionnaire indicated key initiatives which are much welcomed in the protection of children. Yet it is difficult to assess the real impact of these initiatives from the examples given, many of which are noted above in the section on regional progress. Are they ad hoc or sustainable initiatives? Do they cover the problem extensively in terms of geographic reach and groups affected? Or are they merely of limited scope and scale?

Encouragingly, both responses from the government and non-governmental sectors try to be self-critical about various initiatives, and they thus invite reflection to move beyond 'ad hoc-ism' towards sustainability. This is linked with the quality of the initiatives, and some of the challenges facing programming have been noted by both sectors. For instance, the following comments are drawn from two countries with

very different situations, and are given, below, as illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The Afghan Government's response to the questionnaire contains the following comments:

"Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) has only recently come up for discussion. There is very little information on the incidence and magnitude of CSEC; and there is not a functioning reporting/monitoring mechanism in place, and the reports by media are sometimes misleading, as no distinction is made between kidnapping, missing children, smuggling, or trafficking."

"Discussing sexual abuse is taboo and even child sexual abuse is not discussed openly. The culture of silence and the fear of shame contribute greatly to this."

"Ministries have claimed that they will share the NPA with children, but in a culture where participation has not been the norm, judgment will have to be suspended till such time as the process is seen."

"Different law systems (state, sharia, and customary), poor documentation and lack of access to certain state laws, difficulty in ascertaining which laws were still valid (due to imposition of different laws and norms by different regimes, poor quality of translation)."

"To protect family honour and girls, there are very few reports about trafficking and even fewer reports about child sexual abuse."

"Lack of coordination and a monitoring mechanism at the sub-regional level. There is need for active cooperation and dialogue with South Asian and Gulf countries."

" Limited technical and managerial capacity of the ministry; shortage of learning spaces for girls close to their homes; inadequate female teachers; lack of community awareness on the importance of girls' education; poorly trained teachers; old curriculum that is not gender-sensitive; threats by religious extremists about girls' education; security limits access to certain areas."

"No facilities to conduct specialised tests for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or HIV/AIDS in hospitals in Afghanistan."

The non-governmental sector in Nepal made the following observations:

"Lack of active participation of victims and survivors and grassroot-level organisations."

"Lack of conceptual clarity on the rights of the child among community people and existing government laws. Similarly lack of rights-based perspective."

"People are reluctant to come to healing centres due to taboos."

"People are not sensitised about the need for birth registration as the first right of children. Bureaucratic obstacles that prevent children from being registered."

"Lack of support from government bodies."

"Lack of full cooperation of employers. Decreasing support from donors."

"Children's reluctance to get back to the village due to the armed conflict. Parent's reluctance because of social taboo."

"Lack of funds and technical skill to run children's consultation and lack of time for children."

"Lack of child-friendly psychiatrists."

" Obstacles due to political situation."

There are thus a variety of needs yet to be fulfilled, including a responsive approach, adequate facilities and competent personnel and resources.

Laws/Policies, Enforcers and Enforcement

It is clear from the various replies from both the government and non-governmental sectors that in the search for justice all countries have some laws which can be used to promote child protection. These are part of 'civil law', as distinguished from religious or customary law. Often they are in general form in the Constitution and Penal Code and/or in the more precise form of child-specific legislation. However, some national laws also need to be reformed, particularly to raise them to international standards.

Interestingly, the replies from the governments and NGOs do not provide much information on other systems beyond the civil law. It is unclear what the relationship is between the civil law and religious or customary law. Intriguingly, there is the question of what is to be done if religious or customary law conflicts with national civil law and/or international law as represented by the CRC and other international instruments. In principle, the latter should prevail, and in practice, this depends upon a step-by-step approach to set in motion changes in perceptions and behaviour which can help to raise local standards to international standards; including through

dialogue, liberal peer examples, legislative changes, education and other steps. This may take a long time, however.

Another issue deserving attention is that under the CRC and its Optional Protocol, protection afforded to children should be based on the age threshold of 18; a person is a child under that age, and national laws and practices should be adjusted accordingly. Many of the replies to the questionnaire from the region's governments and NGOs do not clearly indicate whether national laws are now in conformity with international law on this issue. Many spend much time discussing the age of criminal responsibility for a child (the age under which a child should not be prosecuted under criminal law and above which the child can be subjected to criminal law for having committed a crime) rather than addressing a different but more pertinent issue: the age for protecting the child from sexual exploitation and abuse absolutely, irrespective of consent to the sexual act. The international trend that national systems should follow is that a child under 18 years of age must be protected absolutely from sexual exploitation and abuse, irrespective of consent. Moreover, the child should be seen as a victim, not a criminal. In this manner, he/she should not be subjected to the criminal law at all.

An offshoot of this question not adequately dealt with in the replies is the impact of immigration law on child victims of trafficking. In many systems in the world, national immigration laws still classify victims of human trafficking as 'illegal immigrants' for having entered the country illegally (without proper documentation). However, the preferred child-rights oriented approach is not to classify child victims of trafficking as illegal immigrants but as victims who should be exempted from the strictures of the immigration law.

A key policy to be explored concretely, particularly in countries not yet having a strong action against child sexual exploitation and abuse, is the adoption and implementation of NPAs in keeping with the spirit of the Stockholm and Yokohama Congresses. It is to be hoped that all South Asian countries will have such plans in the near future. However, an equally important consideration is that they should be well implemented and should help to overcome the various impediments noted in this study.

On another front, there is the issue of quality law enforcement. While the laws are ubiquitous, not enough attention has been paid to the question of how to build quality law enforcers for quality law enforcement. Many of the officials, such as the police, are currently under-trained and underpaid. There has not been adequate capacity building and incentives for law enforcers. Thus many are disinterested in the subject of child protection. Many are more interested in personal survival, and it is regrettable, but not surprising that several are also involved in malpractices that contribute to child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Future steps to improve the situation depend upon an improved selection of law enforcers and capacity building. Personnel need to be better trained and better paid. Monitoring is also needed as well as checks and balances against abuse of power. This can be done in part by involving more civil society actors in monitoring law enforcers, e.g., a civil society board to monitor the police. Members of civil society also have a concrete role to play as out-of-uniform law enforcers - as vigilant guardians against child exploitation and abuse. On a salutary note, this is already happening on some fronts, for example, through the work of NGOs who help to rescue children from trafficking and to ensure their safe return to their homes.

At the regional and international levels, countries of the South Asian region should be lauded for acceding increasingly to international instruments on child protection. There are also the SAARC instruments as noted earlier in the paper. Here again, the test is not 'norm-setting' but rather effective implementation, especially at the national and local levels. More can also be done to promote cross-border cooperation such as through MOUs to counter the practice of human trafficking.

Participation of Families, Communities, Children and Non-state Actors

All countries in the region realise the need to involve families, communities, and children in child protection, and many notable examples of programming are cited above. These vary from the work of NGOs and volunteers to the active involvement of the media in several countries.

Intriguingly, several of the replies to the questionnaire indicate that there is more to be done in reaching out to adults. This means, on the one hand, involving them in protecting children, and on the other hand, changing their behaviour if they are at risk of harming children. Current programmes therefore need to be assessed in terms of how they are, or are not, able to reach out in a more concrete manner to adults and impact their behaviour.

From the angle of child participation, many of the replies provide noteworthy examples in the region. This is a welcome development, but these examples also have to be tested to see whether they genuinely promote child participation or whether they are merely of a token nature.

One of the challenges emerging for child protection is the role of non-state actors. On the

one hand, there are non-state actors such as NGOs working extensively on child protection. They need more support from governments and other entities to enable them to contribute fully. On the other hand, there are other non-state actors who are at times in a more tenuous position. Today, a key concern is to what extent armed dissident groups can be urged to abide by child rights. In some situations it has been possible to encourage them to declare openly that they will abide by child rights. However, the practice is not always easy. In one of the countries covered by this study, for example, an armed dissident group disagrees with the need for birth registration, despite national and international law calling for such registration.

There is also the role of the private/business sector. While some cooperation with this sector is noted in the replies to the questionnaire, this is a sector to be tapped in terms of more commitment to child protection. It includes tourist agencies, the hotel and entertainment industry, and the various 'employers'. Interestingly, one entry point for more government-employers-employees tripartite cooperation is through implementation of ILO Convention No.182, which takes into account the tripartite system already used under ILO-related programming. There are thus possibilities for mobilising far more the good interventions from the private sector to improve the ethics of how it operates.

Availability/Accessibility of Services/Help

The issue of availability and accessibility of services and help is a recurrent challenge in the region. On the one hand, one may laud the commitment to ensure universal access to free and compulsory education, especially for girls who tend to be in a more marginalised position in the

region. On the other hand, there is a need to promote other forms of educational access, including early childhood education. Inevitably, access alone is not enough; quality-based education is also desired, and this often depends upon capacity building of teachers.

There is a need to look at the gap between the age when the child finishes primary schooling, the minimum age of employment, and the real age when the child enters the labour market. That gap may be a dangerous period, which needs to be filled by promoting more access to secondary education. Access to secondary school is thus important, as this is also a means of preventing children from entering the sex market. Moreover, this level of education provides the wherewithal to address more concretely the poverty issue and it enables children to gain the skills and opportunities to engage in productive activities.

One can be sympathetic to the fact that all countries recognise that there is a shortage of services, trained/competent personnel, and help on many fronts, even though many also claim to be developing various forms of safety nets and anti-poverty programmes. This is an interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral challenge. From the angle of the child victims, there is a clear need today to develop more counselling and medical facilities, as well as to train and provide more counsellors and social workers or the equivalent to follow up cases. An evident challenge is to counter the threat of STDs and HIV/AIDS.

On another front, many countries now claim to have more child-friendly procedures, especially in the judicial system. Yet, there is also the question of victim and witness protection, especially from pressure and intimidation, which needs to be explored more in future.

Mechanisms, Networking, Monitoring, Information and Education

There are various mechanisms now in the region acting as focal points against child exploitation. These vary from specific commissions on women and children to ministerial groups. Their work needs support to ensure transparency, sustainability and accessibility to the victims. They also depend much upon networking with government agencies, inter-governmental organisations and civil society groups to gather information and consolidate action to protect children. While this is already taking place to some extent, it can be expanded further.

All countries also realise the need to monitor the situation with a good information base. However, data systems are nascent rather than well established in most countries. This goes hand in hand with the need to systematise the collection of data and to use data well for programming. This should be supplemented by periodic situation analysis and impact assessment of activities to ensure adjustments. Several countries are now moving towards various indicators on child rights, and they need to be supported by disaggregated data, particularly to reflect gender and other disparities.

With regard to education, not only is it important to ensure access by children to education, but also to mobilise the public, including parents, to be sensitised to the risk and situation of child sexual exploitation and abuse. The region is already undertaking various means to do so, including the use of non-formal education and media. These need to be maximised so that they are not ad hoc and to ensure that they provide pressures for attitudinal and behavioural changes, respectful of child rights.

The Region's Current Position in Terms of Commitments

Despite the daunting picture of child sexual exploitation and abuse in many parts of the South Asian region, there have been several positive developments in a number of areas such as laws and policies, programming, and capacity building. Examples of good practice can be seen in the area of cooperation/coordination, including the adoption of national plans of action, accession to international treaties, adopting a regional approach for action such as through SAARC, and possible bilateral cooperation such as through MOUs. There has been a move towards more information gathering and building of data and research on some fronts.

With regard to prevention measures, the most significant advance is the commitment of the region to universal access to free and compulsory primary education. This is particularly linked with the need to overcome discrimination against girls and other marginalised groups. Many countries are also undertaking activities to promote anti-poverty programmes, build safety nets, and provide occupational opportunities. Some law reforms have also been taking place, as well as mobilisation and sensitisation of families, communities and children to the issue of child protection.

With reference to protection measures, a host of laws are now available to protect children, and more law enforcers are being sensitised to promote and respect child rights. There is more involvement of law enforcement through national and local mechanisms, such as district committees, coupled with a decentralised process. Various community initiatives, involving civil society actors, such as NGOs and the media, contribute notably to the protection of children.

Interestingly, all countries are also putting greater emphasis on the issue of birth and marriage registration. The former is essential to acknowledge the legal status of the child and it also enables tracing and tracking of victims of trafficking. It opens the door to easier return to the country of origin, as it is proof of a person's identity. Marriage registration is also important to make the whole process of matrimony more transparent and legally binding. It helps to guarantee the rights of women and girls in the process and it permits scrutiny of the negative impact of early marriage.

Likewise in the area of recovery and reintegration of children, there are key initiatives not only from the government sector but also the non-governmental sector. The non-governmental sector is especially active in programmes to rescue children and provide a safe return to their homes, at times across countries. There are also efforts to provide not only judicial remedies but also medical and psychological care and other support systems.

From the angle of child participation, there are many interesting initiatives throughout the region. These vary from children's clubs to children's participation in the media and in educational programmes oriented to child protection.

In practice, the South Asian region can thus be said to be developing on a step-by-step basis to attain the goals set down by the CRC and relevant instruments, particularly the Stockholm Agenda, the Yokohama Commitment and the South Asia Strategy. Even in the most difficult and precarious settings, it is salutary to note that all countries have some structures, resources and capacity that can be used to protect children.

However, there are also key challenges. The principal challenge is to what extent the various activities noted are sustainable rather than ad hoc, and to what extent there is quality enforcement for the practical realisation of the goals set. Where good activities are already taking place, these need to be expanded with full commitment for sustained support. In this respect, services and help need to be made more available and accessible to all children and their families. Education is key to the whole process, but it needs to be complemented by other actions such as in-country and cross-border cooperation, adequate laws, and a child-responsive judicial system. Effective law/policy enforcement is also needed, along with community mobilisation, national and local mechanisms, competent personnel sensitive to child protection, a transparent monitoring system which promotes reviews and follow-up, and broad-based awareness raising and mobilisation.

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

To sum up, there is a wealth of constructive activities and much wisdom coming from the South Asian region. Several promises under the Yokohama Global Commitment have been kept. Responsive actions include a sense of care within the community for children and family and community support systems to protect children. Governments have also been taking up the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse more explicitly, e.g., through the evolution of national plans of action, the identification of national focal points on child rights, and the involvement of localities in the process. Yet the formal commitment to protect children needs to be complemented more concretely by the actual realisation and implementation of such commitment at the national and local levels.

Inevitably, this requires not only government action but non-government and community-based action of a broad-based and sustained kind. It calls into play a variety of actors, not simply governmental but also non-governmental; ranging from parents and children to communities, NGOs, the media, the private sector and others.

From the experience of the region, steps towards the future should thus underline the following more concretely to address some of the impediments or "promises forgotten."

Cooperation/Coordination

- promote peace, democracy, human rights and equitable development together, without which there can be no true enjoyment of child rights;
- ensure that the political and social commitment to child protection is realised in terms of adequate resource allocation, including shifting military budgets to the social sector and maximising non-material resources, such as voluntarism (community volunteers);
- avoid ad hoc programming, aim for sustainability and enable good programming to enjoy broad scope and coverage, with quality-based actions and personnel;
- adopt and implement national plans of action to protect children, whether they are general plans or specific plans against child sexual exploitation and abuse;
- promote more local and national monitoring of the situation on a longitudinal basis, mapping family and behavioural patterns on a long-term basis, while tracing, tracking and also apprehending the criminal elements that harm children;
- ensure consistent impact assessment of activities on child protection and related

programming, bearing in mind gender sensibility, cultural relevancy, effective review and follow-up.

Prevention

- promote safety nets such as anti-poverty programmes, family and child support systems, with particular emphasis on raising the status of women and the girl child;
- ensure that all children have not only access to free and compulsory education, but also that they complete such education;
- enable children to continue education at the secondary level or the equivalent so that they do not leave school before the reaching the minimum age for employment (preferably 15), as a means of preventing children from entering the labour market too early;
- consolidate action against crime nationally, regionally and internationally through cooperation between key actors, complemented by bilateral MOUs to address cross-border cases;
- integrate the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse into national and local education programming, complemented by more dissemination of human rights/child rights, including to public officials and other powerful groups.

Protection

- ensure that the age to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation is raised to 18 years, while treating the child as a victim and not a criminal;
- disseminate information on birth registration and marriage registration to enable the public to see their importance, and ensure that they take place to promote transparency, aimed at protecting the child's identity and his/her rights;
- avoid treating child victims of cross-border

trafficking as illegal immigrants under national immigration laws, but treat them as victims to be protected with dignity and in safety;

- promote quality law enforcement by selecting good candidates for law enforcers, train them in human rights/child rights, ensure that human/rights child rights are part of the curriculum for training law enforcers, pay them adequately, and monitor them by establishing a board of monitors drawn from civil society;
- build local capacity to protect children through a decentralisation process aimed at involving local actors such as village and district committees/chiefs in child protection, and establish networks of protectors nationally and internationally;
- overcome cultural taboos and social stigmas by means of an active awareness-raising campaigns and good peer examples, complemented by laws aimed at promoting equality and non-discrimination;
- hold dialogue with non-state actors, including religious/spiritual leaders, the private sector, and those in armed conflicts,, so that they commit themselves to child rights, and involve more private sector participation to prevent abuses;
- target more adult involvement in child protection from the community and family levels upwards;
- encourage the media to act as protectors of children, especially through investigative journalism, while respecting children's privacy;

- ensure that national and local mechanisms working on human rights and child rights work together to address the concerns of children, and use them effectively to provide redress for the victims.

Recovery/Reintegration

- promote more accessible facilities to help children and their families, including shelters, hotlines, medical and judicial assistance, referral systems and use of traditional networks, including religious and spiritual personnel, to help children;
- train and provide more counsellors to assist children in their psychological recovery, and promote more education on health care, including on protection from HIV and STDs, with special attention to gender sensitivity, while informing the public of where help is available;
- promote more victim-sensitive facilities and procedures, and provide protection to victims and witnesses from harassment and intimidation.

Children's Participation

- maximise child participation in all programmes concerning children and foster peer (child-to-child) help and education, while avoiding tokenism;
- involve the child, families and communities more concretely through joint programmes which integrate child rights and child protection, e.g., anti-poverty programmes which also incorporate advocacy of child rights and information on where help is available.

The report has been compiled by Vitit Muntarbhorn who is a Professor at the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. He was formerly UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

