



South Asia Regional Child Rights Group Calls for an Urgent End to Child Domestic Labour and All Violence against Children

New Delhi, India (June 4, 2013) – Reinforcing the message of the 2013 World Day against Child Labour to be marked on June 12, the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG) urges Governments and all concerned groups, including civil society organizations, the social partners, business, the media and development agencies, to take rigorous and urgent action within their countries and regionally to end child domestic labour, which has entrapped millions of children in South Asian homes. It calls for the protection and promotion of the rights of all children against all forms of violence in all settings.

Around the world, 15.5 million children are estimated to be engaged in domestic work. More than 10 million of these children are either below the minimum age for employment or involved in hazardous work, leaving them extremely vulnerable to violence and abuse. Many are also very young, with 47 percent of child domestic workers under the age of 14 and 3.5 million no more than 5 to 11 years old. In addition, a significant number of the more than 5.5 million children estimated to be victims of forced labour and human trafficking are believed to end up in domestic work. Of particular concern is that almost three-quarters of all these child domestic workers are girls.

South Asia, as home to some half-a-billion children – the largest child population of any region - has among the largest number of children engaged in child labour and other forms of exploitation. 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 devoured by child domestic labour, working 12 hours or more a day - with little or no pay - every day of the week, exposed to physical, sexual and psychological violence, and deprived of their rights to care, education, recreation, rest, and overall development. The consequences 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.

The underlying causes of child labour are often deep, structural, and interwoven with causes of other forms of violence against children. Among these are widespread poverty, gross inequality of income distribution, inadequate education and lack of social and child protection. SACG recognizes that the prevention, removal, and reintegration of children involved in exploitative or abusive child domestic work require long-term national and community-based solutions and effective child and social protection systems. A multi-pronged approach is the imperative.

Noting the wide-ranging commitments that Governments have made in regard to children, the SACG calls on South Asian Governments, as primary duty bearers, to prioritize the protection and well-being of children in national (and subnational) development plans, budgets and programmes, particularly through:

- Legislative and policy reforms to ensure the elimination of child labour in domestic work, and the provision of decent work conditions and appropriate protection to young workers in domestic work who have reached the legal working age;
- Ratification and effective implementation of ILO Conventions No. 138 on the Minimum Age to Employment; No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and No.189 concerning decent work for domestic workers⁴
- Action to strengthen the movement against all violence against children and to help build the capacity of social partners and civil society organizations, including domestic workers organizations, to address child labour in domestic work in South Asia in partnership with Governments and other stakeholders.

The SACG further calls for **civil society organizations, the social partners, and business in South Asia** to contribute to the strengthening of the child protection and labour law compliance systems. It calls for enhanced collaboration and synergy with Governments and amongst themselves; the promotion of safe child participation to give children a meaningful voice; and, in addition to other measures, a strengthening of children's resilience, support to monitoring and reporting mechanisms, prevention and response services, and accountability systems.

Recognizing the significance of SAARC's apex body on Children, the **South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC)**, SACG calls for SAIEVAC Governing Board Members to fully implement its Five-Year Work Plan with support and cooperation from all concerned entities of the SAARC Governments, civil society and children and the international community.

We call for **the Media** to promote productive dialogue and debate on child labour and other forms of violence against children, and to deliberately engage in raising awareness on the rights of children in domestic work, at all levels of society. We urge the media to act responsibly, and to uphold confidentiality of personal information and dignity principles when reporting on acts of neglect, abuse, exploitation, and other forms of violence against children.

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ABOUT SACG:

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

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

For further information on the SACG initiative, please contact: Sherin Khan, SACG Chair at khans@ilo.org or Antonella Bernardini, SACG Co-Chair at Antonella_Bernardini@wvi.org

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