



**4<sup>th</sup> Technical Consultation**  
**on**  
**Stepping Up Protection of Children with Disabilities in South Asia**

**Regional Children's Consultation**

**3-4 December 2014**

**Colombo, Sri Lanka**



**Hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka**

**Organized and Showcased by the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat**

**Supported by:**

**South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG)**

**and**

**SAARC Development Fund (SDF)**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat organised the Regional Children’s Consultation on “Stepping up Protection of Children with Disabilities in South Asia” in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 3-4 December 2014. The Consultation was organised with the support from the South Asia Coordination Group on Actions against Violence against Children (SACG) and hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka. 26 child delegates elected by their peers during the preparatory consultation held in the 8 countries took part in the Regional Consultation. Selected members from the SACG, National Actions and Coordination Group against Violence against Children (NACG) in Sri Lanka and SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat (SRS) facilitated the sessions of the Regional Consultation.

The two days consultation provided an excellent opportunity for the child delegates to share the outcomes from their national consultations. Based on the outcomes of the national consultations, the child delegates explored numerous issues affecting children with disabilities (CWDs) in the 8 countries in the SAARC Region. Children also identified the existing good practices that should be further strengthened in all the countries.

Having identified various issues affecting CWDs in the 8 countries, the consultation put forward 12 overarching recommendations to be presented to the governments and other stakeholders during the 4<sup>th</sup> Technical Consultation. The 12 recommendations are as follows:

1. Laws and policies need to be inclusive and non-discriminatory. They should be disability friendly and implemented effectively. There needs to be sufficient budgetary allocations to implement these policies and laws. Disability education needs to be introduced in school curriculums.
2. The services such as education, health and public services need to be inclusive, disability friendly, of good quality and accessible for children with disabilities. All the service providers must respect the dignity of children with disabilities. Also, a reporting mechanism should be in place to directly reach the concerned authorities.
3. Measures should be taken to raise awareness among people to change attitudes and ensure respectful communications using good quality and accessible information. It may include resource centres, code of conduct, and the use of media.
4. Measures need to be taken to develop skills and competencies of parents and professionals to work with children with disabilities.
5. Opportunities need to be created for children with disabilities to participate at all levels including trainings on staying protected, economic empowerment and recreational activities.
6. Children should also respect, support, treat equally and provide equal opportunities for children with disabilities.
7. Families should ensure equal participation of children with disabilities in social functions, family gatherings and other occasions. They should learn the issues and languages of the children with disabilities provide protective environment and pay more attention to the children with disabilities.
8. Schools should have measures in place to protect the children with disabilities from abuse and violence in coordination with the families of children. Children with disabilities should be represented in decision making in schools.

9. Private sectors should make their services accessible for all children with disabilities by removing language and infrastructure barriers. They should show sensitivity and have safety measures in place for children with disabilities.
10. Strict actions must be taken against those who commit violence against children with disabilities. Peace and security must be maintained in the region for the protection of the children with disabilities.
11. The technologies and equipment for supporting the children with disabilities should be improved and made available.
12. The governments, children and all other concerned actors should continue interaction and exchanges through regular consultations focusing on the rights and needs of children with disabilities at different levels.

## 1. DAY ONE – 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER 2014

### 1.1. THE INAUGURAL SESSION

**1.1.1. Opening:** The Inaugural Session of the SAIEVAC Regional Children’s Consultation on “Stepping up Protection of Children with Disabilities in South Asia” was presided over by the honourable Secretary to the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Affairs of Sri Lanka, *Mr. Eric Illeyapparachchi*. The Session was also graced by *Dr. Rinchen Chopel*, the Director General of SAIEVAC (SDG), *Ms. Nabila Noori* and *Mr. Mohammad Mamun*, SAIEVAC Child Governing Board Representatives, *Ms. Anoma Dissanayake*, Chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka, *Mr. Raša Sekulović*, Regional Adviser, Child Rights and Protection from Plan Asia Regional Office, *Ms. Champa Gunasekara*, Chairperson of the NACG Sri Lanka.

*Ms. Rashmi Vidyani*, former SAIEVAC Child Governing Board member from Sri Lanka facilitated the Inaugural Session and extended a warm welcome to everyone who participated in the Consultation. The Consultation was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

**1.1.2. Opening remarks by the SDG:** SDG welcomed all participants from the 8 SAARC countries while appreciating the efforts invested in organising the national level processes in preparation for the regional consultation. SDG extended his sincere thanks to the Government of Sri Lanka through *Mr. Eric Illeyapparachchi*, SAIEVAC Governing Board member from Sri Lanka, for hosting the Regional Consultation. SDG also extended a warm welcome to the child governing board members, NACG representatives from Sri Lanka and the SACG members who participated in the Consultation. SDG introduced the facilitators of the Children’s Consultation and shared a special thank to *Ms. Rashmi Vidyani*, former Child Governing Board member from Sri Lanka who volunteered to co-facilitate a number of sessions.

SDG also highlighted the key developments and purpose of SAIEVAC. He remarked how SAIEVAC was started in 2005 and eventually grew up into a fully fledged regional movement addressing issues related to violence against children in South Asia. He noted how SAIEVAC aims at creating a common regional platform to advance and further strengthen the efforts towards ending violence against children. SDG noted how all SAARC countries raised the importance of organising a regional consultation dedicated to exploring the issues affecting children with disabilities during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Technical Consultation held in Bhutan in 2013. He remarked how extensive preparations were undertaken at regional and national levels since then to make the 4<sup>th</sup> SAIEVAC Technical Consultation a reality.

Concluding the opening remarks, SDG asked participants to establish and strengthen networking with participants from the other countries, so they could further strengthen their ongoing efforts to advocate for the realisation of the rights of the children with disabilities. SDG reaffirmed SAIEVAC’s continued commitment to support children and civil society in their efforts.

**1.1.3. Remarks by the NACG Sri Lanka Chairperson:** *Champa Gunasekara*, NACG Chairperson of Sri Lanka extended a warm welcome to all child delegates. She remarked the significance of the regional consultation as all children bring in valuable inputs from their national consultations. She opined how the consultation could also be a good opportunity to strengthen children's networking at the regional level. Extending her best wishes to the consultation she also mentioned the recreational activities that have been organised for child delegates to make their stay more enjoyable and memorable.

**1.1.4. Remarks by the Child Governing Board Member:** Speaking at the Inaugural Session, *Mohammad Mamun*, the child Governing Board Member from Bangladesh remarked that the consultation provided them with a special opportunity to discuss issues affecting children with disabilities for the first time at the regional level. He hoped that their messages would be supported by SAIEVAC and the governments in all SAARC countries and that the governments would take measures to implement children's rights and create safer environments free of violence for all children in South Asia. He also requested SAIEVAC to continue supporting their efforts for the realisation of children's rights.

*Nabila Noori*, the Child Governing Board Member from Afghanistan shared a verse which said "Don't take my kindness as a sign of my weakness. If you want to create a bright future, please pay attention to your children and end all forms of violence against them".

**1.1.5. Address by the SACG representative:** *Raša Sekulović*, Regional Adviser, Child Rights and Protection from Plan Asia Regional Office, welcomed participants on behalf of the South Asia Coordination Group for Actions against Violence against Children (SACG). He remarked that "every child is equal yet all children are different. These differences make our societies beautiful and strong. We are here to celebrate diversities and to learn from each other on how we can contribute to ensuring that all children are protected from all forms of violence" *Raša* asked everyone to make it an opportunity to send messages to all the adults who are responsible for creating safer environments for children. *Raša* reaffirmed SACG's continued commitment to extend the fullest support to ending violence against children in the Region.

**1.1.6. Remarks by the chief guest:** As the chief guest of the Inaugural Ceremony, honourable Secretary to the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs of Sri Lanka, *Mr. Eric Illeyapparachchi* welcomed the participants to Sri Lanka. He considered it a privilege that he was able to participate in the consultation which carried much significance and value. The Secretary highlighted the value of diversity and the importance of respecting differences in the society. He noted how the modern world places much importance on the concept of diversity and remarked how it becomes relevant in any cultural context. Speaking further, he said "I must salute all children, chaperons and guardians who are in charge of supporting these children in their efforts to realise their own rights. We should continue to work together to strengthen our efforts to engage actively with the governments to ensure the protection and wellbeing of all children" Furthermore, he noted the importance of governments addressing the special needs of children

with disabilities by establishing required policy frameworks. Similarly, he stressed the importance of starting such efforts from the early childhood in order for such interventions to be effective.

**1.1.7. Vote of thanks:** *Ms. Sujatha Kulathunge*, Deputy Chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka delivered the vote of thanks and concluded the Inaugural Session.

## **1.2. BUSINESS SESSION**

**1.2.1. Introductions:** *Shashike Gamage* from Plan Asia Regional Office facilitated an interactive activity enabling the participants to get to know each other. Child delegates introduced themselves by their name and shared how they express feelings of happiness. Chaperons, interpreters and facilitators also introduced themselves following child delegates' introductions.

**1.2.2. Child Protection briefing:** *Champa Gunasekara*, NACG Chairperson Sri Lanka briefed the gathering on the child protection and safety procedures. Key highlights included the following:

- Special attention to be given to the medical and dietary needs of children;
- Chaperons to approach the child protection focal points (CPFPs) with any requirements related to children's protection, safety and wellbeing;
- Introduction of the child protection focal points;
- Introducing emergency contacts to children and chaperons;
- Chaperons need to be physically present with the child and attend to their needs;
- Chaperons to liaise closely with the CPFPs to keep the organisers informed of any difficulties that children might be experiencing;
- Interpreters/parents/care givers to make sure that children are able to communicate with the others and translate exactly what has been said in all situations;
- Need to maintain an ethical approach, transparency, participatory process, children's and adolescents best interest in all circumstances;
- Creating a safe and welcoming environment to everyone;
- Respecting each other and their differences and
- Introducing a complaints/suggestions box.

**1.2.3. Review and adoption of the Agenda:** SDG remarked that the consultation presents a great opportunity for the child representatives to identify the issues affecting children with disabilities and to define priorities which need to be addressed in the 8 countries. Clarifying the key objective of the Consultation, SDG asked child delegates to share their ideas and inputs from their national consultations freely and openly, so these in turn can be transferred into messages that can be shared with the governments. He also remarked that the two days will be full of presentations, group exercises, leisure and recreational activities.

SDG provided an overview of the development and purpose of SAIEVAC. He noted that SAIEVAC's agenda is mainly driven by promoting meaningful participation of children and that it is the only intergovernmental mechanisms in the world in which children and civil society sit together with the government representatives in the Governing Board and take decisions in

favour of ending violence against children. He remarked how these efforts will be further strengthened by creating a regional child participation forum in the future when the national child participation forums are firmly established in all the 8 countries. He asked child delegates to speculate how they would like to contribute and energise that process. SDG reassured to take children's decisions seriously and committed to report back on the progress made.

#### **Questions and clarifications following the presentation**

- Responding to a question whether there are similar mechanisms like SAIEVAC in the other regions, SDG noted that national level organisations have established efforts to include children in development processes. There are a number of mechanisms in the other regions which have attempted to involve children in ending violence against them. SDG noted that all these movements are expected to contribute to a larger global movement of ending violence against children across the world.
- A participant remarked the importance of involving people with practical experiences in working with children with disabilities during the Technical Consultation as they have first-hand experience on issues affecting these children. SDG remarked how efforts have been made to involve them during the process while highlighting numerous limitations of the Technical Consultation. He noted that SAIEVAC made a conscious effort to bring in people representing governments, UN, INGOs, NGOs, children, child governing board members and so on while stressing the importance of gathering a collective energy to make the consultation more impactful.
- Participants commended SAIEVAC's efforts in organising the first ever regional consultation focusing on the issues affecting children with disabilities. SDG remarked that SAIEVAC will take efforts to organise similar consultations in the future as well. He also highlighted how the issues related to children with disabilities have emerged as a regional and global priority. SDG noted that the recent SAARC Declaration has underlined the importance of addressing the issues affecting children with disabilities and that many NACGs have prioritise "disability" as a cross cutting issue in their programmes.

**1.2.4. Objectives and expectations:** *Shashike Gamage* facilitated a discussion to elicit participants' expectations from the Regional Consultation. Following the discussion, he presented the objectives of the consultation.

#### **Expectations shared by the child delegates**

- Sharing the discussions of the national consultations with everyone
- Expect SAIEVAC to take valuable decisions from the recommendations made by children
- Need to consult children with disabilities regularly to address issues affecting them
- Learn different issues affecting children with disabilities in the other countries
- To discuss how to break the discrimination in society against children with disabilities

#### **Objectives of the Regional Consultation**

1. To discuss what is working well and not working well for children with disabilities in the SAARC countries;

2. To identify the gaps/problems affecting the protection of children with disabilities and offer recommendations and
3. Enjoy being together and getting to know each other.

**1.2.5. Exploring key issues concerning the protection of children with disabilities in the Region:**

*Rashmi Vidyani* and *Raša Sekulović* facilitated the session. Facilitators asked children to work in two groups and identify what is working well and what is not working well for children with disabilities (CWDs) in the respective countries with particular focus on challenges and the opportunities concerning their protection. Following the discussions, the two groups shared the following points in the plenary:

Things working well for CWDs	Things that are not working well for CWDs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational opportunities are made available for CWDs.</li> <li>• National programmes and news telecasts use sign language to make them accessible to children with hearing impairments.</li> <li>• 7 out of 8 SAARC countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities.</li> <li>• In some countries, public transport systems have dedicated seats or people with disabilities.</li> <li>• There are some NGOs which help raising awareness among parents and the general public to stop harassing and abusing CWDs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorities do not allow CWDs to admit to pre-schools and there are no special education opportunities for CWDs.</li> <li>• Teachers are not trained to work with CWDs and sometimes they scold CWDs.</li> <li>• There are many barriers related to accessibility (to schools, buses, parks, etc).</li> <li>• There are not enough tools for visually impaired children to support their education.</li> <li>• Parents do not know where to get support for CWDs.</li> <li>• All services are concentrated in urban areas but not in other areas.</li> <li>• CWDs are exploited for begging.</li> <li>• Children are not treated well by the general public (misbehaviour/ bad treatment towards CWDs).</li> <li>• Child marriage is one of the big challenges affecting children with disabilities</li> <li>• CWDs lack future prospects (career opportunities)</li> </ul>

Following the sharing *Raša* summarised the key points and remarked that the group work outcomes provided a sound beginning for deeper discussions. He also thanked the child delegates' contributions.

**1.2.6. Country presentations:** *Radhika Alkazi* facilitated the session and asked participants to share the key discussions and messages from their country consultations using any creative presentation medium. Children presented the outcomes from country consultation through dramas, role-play, dances, poems and posters.

**a) Sri Lanka:** In the form of a drama, child representatives from Sri Lanka presented the issues affecting CWDs. The drama depicted how CWDs are exploited, abused and mistreated

- within their own families and how CWDs are forced to engage in risky activities unsuitable for their age.
- b) Pakistan:** Child delegates presented the issues of CWDs in Pakistan through a role-play. The role-play illustrated how CWDs are often neglected and mistreated by the family members including parents and how such discrimination exposes them to numerous vulnerabilities.
  - c) Bhutan:** Bhutanese children presented the issues affecting CWDs through a drawing. It portrayed how CWDs are exposed to higher risks due to the lack of a safe environment and how children with hearing impairments are deprived of access to information. The presentation also pointed out the need for supporting parents to care for CWDs effectively as very often they lack this knowledge. Furthermore, the drawing also illustrated the need for raising awareness among peers as CWDs are often mistreated and bullied by them.
  - d) Bangladesh:** Through a poster presentation, child delegates presented the issues affecting CWDs in Bangladesh. The poster indicated how CWDs are not sent to school, forced into child marriage, exposed to higher vulnerabilities such as child trafficking, exploitation and child labour. Child delegates highlighted how CWDs could achieve their best potentials had all these barriers removed. A child delegate with hearing impairment performed a dance and demonstrated how children with similar disabilities are included in dancing activities in their child club activities.
  - e) Afghanistan:** Child delegates from Afghanistan presented a poster which indicated how CWDs are often neglected and considered as a burden by their own family members. The presentation also highlighted how CWDs are forced to live on the streets, bullied and exposed to sexual harassments. Also, it portrayed how CWDs are highly vulnerable during conflict situations and how the parents' separation and addiction to drugs and alcohol impact negatively on CWDs.
  - f) The Maldives:** Through a role-play child delegates from the Maldives presented the importance of removing barriers for CWDs for education. The role-play highlighted how CWDs are often deprived of education and neglected in the community.
  - g) India:** Child delegates from India shared pictures of numerous activities organised for CWDs. Sharing the outcomes from the national consultation, the child delegates highlighted a number of issues affecting CWDs which included issues related to accessibility, inclusion, attitudinal barriers, lack of trained teachers, concerns regarding the safety and protection of CWDs. The presentation highlighted the need for removing different barriers for CWDs to achieve their full potentials, particularly within the educational settings. It also indicated the need for increasing peer support for CWDs and improving friendships. Furthermore, the presenter highlighted the need for timely identification of invisible disabilities such as autism. Child delegates shared two poems following the presentation which are transcribed in the below text box.

*“I understand a little slowly, just talk to me little slowly and don’t talk to me so fast. Don’t think I am any less than others, listen to me and understand what I am trying to say, understand and then tell others what I am trying to say. Only if you listen to me you will understand what I am trying to say, and you will know I also mean something. Though I may speak little slowly, my mind works very fast. I don’t lost hope and you also should not lose hope. It might take us a little time, but we will understand each other”*

*“We all are different, we all speak in different ways, but we mean the same things. Our roads may be different, but where we want to go remains the same, so we may be saying the same thing in many different ways”*

**h) Nepal:** Children from Nepal shared recommendation from their national consultation presented as “Kathmandu Declaration”. Child delegates offered the following recommendations to the Government, NGOs, parents, guardians, teachers and other members of the community.

#### **Recommendations to the Government**

- Take measure to protect and promote the rights of CWDs.
- Establish policies, laws and regulations for the protection of CWDs from all forms of violence and abuses.
- Government to ensure our rights in the new constitution that is being drafted in Nepal.
- Draft plans for the development of CWDs who constitute 10% of the total children’s population in Nepal.
- Introduce programmes targeting CWDs and involve them in those programmes.
- A census has never been held in Nepal to identify the exact number of CWDs. Take measures to initiate a comprehensive census.
- CWDs have a higher risk of being abused due to their vulnerabilities, take measures to ensure their protection.
- Make education system easily accessible and free for CWDs.
- Regularly monitor the systems set up to ensure the welfare and protection of CWDs.
- Make roads, parks and other public places disability friendly.
- Make information available to all CWDs in the manner that is accessible to them while educating the general public on how to communicate with CWDs.
- Ensure meaningful participation of CWDs in all matters that are concerning them.

#### **Recommendations to the Non-Governmental Organisations**

- Employ staff members with knowledge, skills and attitudes that are appropriate to work with CWDs.
- Government, non-government, communities, children, guardians are made aware about appropriate behaviours towards CWDs.
- Ensure that the organisation runs programmes that are inclusive for CWDs.
- Make it a priority to work with CWDs in all organisations.
- Organise awareness raising campaigns and advocacy work to fulfil the rights of CWDs.
- Enact child protection policies in all organisations which outline appropriate behaviours for CWDs and all children in general.
- Make organisations disability and child friendly.

### **Parents, guardians, teachers and members of communities**

- Provide us due care, support and motivation that help us gather and increase confidence. Do not extend unnecessary sympathy and pity implying that we are disabled and helpless.
- Ensure that we are not discriminated and protect us from all forms of abuse. Let us play and get support without being shouted and ill-treated and that will help us achieve higher goals.
- Take measures to protect us from sexual and other abuses in schools. Set up complaint boxes and take actions against the perpetrators considering that CWDs are more vulnerable to abuses and that guardians and relatives are involved in many cases.
- Include and listen to us in decision making and planning at homes. Believe that we have the right to information, fair treatment, equal environment like other children in all places including schools, homes, communities, public transportation, parks, market places and vehicles.

**1.2.7. End of Day One:** Following the country presentations, *Radhika* summarised the discussions and highlighted 3 key aspects emerged from all presentations. These included:

- Need for ensuring access to education and quality of such education for CWDs;
- Eliminating various forms of violence against CWDs and
- Ensuring inclusivity for CWDs in all aspects of their lives.

Concluding the discussion of Day One, *Raša* thanked children for sharing their experiences and noted that CWDs are abled just like any other children and in many cases even more abled in doing things which other children cannot do. He remarked that it is about sharing the specific skills of CWDs and making sure that their voices reach to everyone and that it is a very powerful voice that CWDs are speaking with.

## **2. DAY TWO – 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2014**

**2.1. Welcome for the Day Two:** *Raša* welcomed the participants to the Day Two of the Consultation. He remarked the importance of the International Day of the People with Disabilities which is commemorated on 3<sup>rd</sup> December every year. *Raša* highlighted the significance of organising a consultation dedicated to discussing issues affecting CWDs parallel to the International Day of the People with Disabilities.

**2.2. Re-cap of Day One:** *Nabila* and *Mamun* facilitated an interactive activity to recap the discussions and key messages from Day One.

**2.3. Formulating recommendations – Group Work:** *Raša* clarified the objectives of the group activity and elaborated the process to be followed. He highlighted the importance of focusing specifically on protection of children with disabilities based on the discussions on Day One which spanned across a broader area. Therefore, the group discussions were to focus on different forms of

violence, mistreatment and exploitation that are affecting CWDs and to identify solutions to address these issues. He asked the participants to work in two groups and think about specific messages that need to be shared with the governments and other stakeholders during the Technical Consultation, so they can take measures to address these issues effectively.

- 2.4. Group work outcomes presentations:** Following the group activities, participants presented the outcomes of their discussions in the plenary.

**Group 1: Things that are working well/existing good practices for CWDs – Outcomes and recommendations from the discussions**

**Existing good practices as identified by Group 1**

- Non-formal education for parents offered in some countries.
- Educational opportunities are available to CWDs in some countries.
- Sign language facilities are made available.
- UNCRPD is ratified by almost all countries in the Region.
- Specific space/seat allocated for CWDs in public transportation.
- NGOs help raising parents' awareness to stop abusive practices.
- Personal attendants for transportation and dedicated teachers in schools for CWDs are made available in some countries.
- Children's clubs in schools have been established and they include CWDs.
- Disability related curriculum in professional training and education introduced.
- Inclusive education is being practiced in some countries.
- Special walking tracks, reflector ramps are being installed to make the cities more accessible.
- Railway stations/platforms are being made accessible for CWDs.
- Education is free and there are some additional vocational training opportunities.
- Clear definition and inclusion of mental disabilities and autism in law and constitution.
- Accessible stadiums and recreational facilities are available in some countries.
- Community protection groups are in place in some countries.
- Some families are adopting CWDs.
- Efforts have been taken in some countries to help families with CWDs with self-employment opportunities.
- Strengthening of legal frameworks for the protection of children in general.
- Tools to understand and assess the whole range of sexual abuses introduced.
- Increasing awareness and issues being reported increasingly.
- Using theatre/music to empower children with disabilities.

**Recommendations shared by Group 1**

**Recommendations for governments**

- Strengthening families for resilience through counselling.
- Strengthening children to talk about their issues.

- Making different facilities (therapeutic) available to parents (secondary disabilities).
- Provision of caretakers for families with working parents.
- More training for teachers on working/communicating with CWDs.
- Law enforcement to prevent violence and prosecute perpetrators.
- Social campaigns and use of media to increase public awareness.
- Increase opportunities for education.
- Establish a direct reporting/complaint system to government authorities.
- Engage in sharing and learning with other countries.
- Strengthen the security and peace throughout the country.
- Improve the infrastructure in all areas and make them accessible to CWDs.

#### **Recommendations for children**

- Respect each other, treat equally, include and provide equal opportunities, encourage meaningful participation in the groups and help each other.
- Do not humiliate.

#### **Recommendations for families**

- Equal participation in social functions, family gatherings and other social events.
- Have no discrimination between children with and without disabilities.
- Do not neglect the CWDs.
- Family should provide a protective environment for CWDs.
- Do not pity the CWDs.
- Learn and understand the difficulties, language of CWDs.

#### **Recommendations for Schools**

- Quality education opportunities for all CWDs.
- Measures for protection against abuse and violence.
- Teachers and parents exchange and coordination to extend support to CWDs effectively.
- Encourage/train children without disabilities to support the CWDs.
- Include CWDs in decision making.
- Welcoming, friendly approach by the teachers to encourage CWDs/share their concerns.
- Have no discrimination.

#### **Recommendations for Private Sector**

- Make their services accessible for all CWDs (communication/infrastructure)
- Establish safety measures for CWDs in their products and services.

#### **Recommendations for communities in general**

- Work together for the wellbeing of CWDs without discrimination.
- Respect the dignity of their children.
- Promote the languages of CWDs and train others.

- Support organising fun activities and trainings for CWDs.

## **Group 2: Existing challenges for CWDs – Outcomes and recommendations from the discussions**

### **Existing challenges as identified by Group 2**

- Violence against children happening in different places including home, community, school, institutions and work.
- CWDs are hidden, abused, locked up, chained or isolated and not registered at birth.
- Prejudices – thinking that disability is due to bad karma.
- CWDs (specially girls) are highly vulnerable for sexual abuse. When such incidents are reported, they are not trusted or taken seriously.
- Lack of complaints mechanisms to report issues.
- Parents do not educate CWDs as they think these children would not be able to care for them in their old age.
- Deprived of getting legal documents (e.g. passports) as physically handicapped children cannot sign or give the thumb impression.
- Architectural barriers/environmental barriers – no wheelchair ramps, etc (needs to be regulated by laws and policies as they lead to exclusion and discrimination).
- Lack of support materials for CWDs (Braille, tools for vision impaired children).
- Lack of disability friendly laws and policies and their implementation.
- Lack of budgetary allocations for supporting CWDs.
- Problems related to the quality and access to education.
- Barriers in terms of access to different services and facilities.
- Lack of job opportunities and future prospects.
- Vulnerability to sexual abuse and other forms of abuse.
- Security and neglect during emergencies and disasters.
- Lack of knowledge among parents on how to support CWDs during emergencies.
- Prevalent malnutrition among CWDs.
- Exploitation and forcing CWDs for begging.
- Forcing CWDs to get married
- Misbehaviour, neglect and mistreatment and negative attitude towards CWDs at all levels.
- Lack of knowledge of their rights (among CWDs and others)
- Facilities in centred in the cities and not in villages.
- Peer bullying and mockery.
- Teachers' discriminatory behaviours.
- Lack of recreational activities, exclusion and mental abuse
- Lack of policy and laws and their implementation
- Lack of coordination among different services.
- Lack of opportunities for participation
- Lack of staff to support children with disabilities

- Public transportation needs to be disability friendly
- People who work with CWDs lack knowledge and training to work with them
- Gaps in communication – people/children do not know how to communicate in sign language which prevents building up relationships/friendships.
- Specific information about health and hygiene for CWDs is lacking.
- No/lack of sex education to CWDs which leaves them vulnerable to sexual abuse.

**2.5. Finalization of Children’s Recommendations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Technical Consultation:** Based on the outcomes of the group discussions, 12 overarching recommendations were formulated to be presented to the governments and other stakeholders during the 4<sup>th</sup> Technical Consultation. The 12 recommendations are as follows:

1. Laws and policies need to be inclusive and non-discriminatory. They should be disability friendly and implemented effectively. There needs to be sufficient budgetary allocations to implement these policies and laws. Disability education needs to be introduced in school curriculums.
2. The services such as education, health and public services need to be inclusive, disability friendly, of good quality and accessible for children with disabilities. All the service providers must respect the dignity of children with disabilities. Also, a reporting mechanism should be in place to directly reach the concerned authorities.
3. Measures should be taken to raise awareness among people to change attitudes and ensure respectful communications using good quality and accessible information. It may include resource centres, code of conduct, and the use of media.
4. Measures need to be taken to develop skills and competencies of parents and professionals to work with children with disabilities.
5. Opportunities need to be created for children with disabilities to participate at all levels including trainings on staying protected, economic empowerment and recreational activities.
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7. Families should ensure equal participation of children with disabilities in social functions, family gatherings and other occasions. They should learn the issues and languages of the children with disabilities provide protective environment and pay more attention to the children with disabilities.
8. Schools should have measures in place to protect the children with disabilities from abuse and violence in coordination with the families of children. Children with disabilities should be represented in decision making in schools.
9. Private sectors should make their services accessible for all children with disabilities by removing language and infrastructure barriers. They should show sensitivity and have safety measures in place for children with disabilities.

10. Strict actions must be taken against those who commit violence against children with disabilities. Peace and security must be maintained in the region for the protection of the children with disabilities.
11. The technologies and equipment for supporting the children with disabilities should be improved and made available.
12. The governments, children and all other concerned actors should continue interaction and exchanges through regular consultations focusing on the rights and needs of children with disabilities at different levels.

**2.6. Concluding remarks by SDG:** Concluding the Regional Consultation of children, SDG thanked all the child delegates for their excellent contribution during the two days. He remarked that the Consultation should only be considered as a starting step to many similar efforts in the future in order to ensure increased protection of CWDs in the SAARC Region. SDG thanked children, chaperons, NACGs, SACG and all the governments in South Asia for their invaluable contribution and support for organising the national consultations and the regional consultation.