



DELHI DECLARATION 2011

Outcome document of 9th Asia Pacific Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect 5th – 9th October 2011

1. Preamble:

We, the participants of the 9th ISPCAN Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Child Abuse & Neglect representing governments, non-governmental organizations, networks and institutions, including professionals from all sectors and disciplines, children and adolescents from 40 countries assembled in New Delhi, India, to review and assess the challenges posed by violence, neglect and abuse of children in our countries – such as the persistence of corporal punishment, to identify and determine the opportunities before us to address and overcome these violations of child rights, do hereby register our concern that neglect and abuse of children stand as a critical issue of development and justice across Asia and the Pacific, and believe that all our countries must act to secure for all children a protective and caring environment. In so doing, we ask for the commitment and leadership of our governments, legislatures and judiciaries, and of all those who determine or affect the status and condition of children.

2. We recognize that:

Neglect is denial or deficiency of either the provision and delivery of services such as health care and education.

All Countries of our region are States-Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and its covenants and are thereby committed to securing these rights for all children in their jurisdiction;

The United Nations has, in its Special Study on Violence Against Children worldwide, mobilized all nations and their leadership to acknowledge the prevalence of neglect and abuse of children as a challenge of global proportions and of international and national concern.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued a special General Comment¹ declaring the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and has set international standards to ensure the protection of children.

The International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN) affirms that effective and sustainable prevention is achieved through education and professional cooperation “to promote opportunities, facilities and organizations which will enable the children of all nations to develop physically, mentally and socially, ensuring the protection of every child in every country, against all forms of cruelty and exploitation.”

3. We express our concern at:

The threats to children’s right to life before and after birth and throughout the period of growth;

The violation of many children’s right to a caring and protective environment and the unacceptable affront that this inflicts on children’s dignity.

Denial of opportunities for all children to realize their full potential and enjoy all human rights of survival, development, protection and self-expression, with the security of nutrition, health care and education throughout childhood;

The suffering and damage that children experience because of the inadequacy and absence of protection in all settings;

The adverse and negative portrayal of children, the depiction of violence as acceptable and even attractive in both traditional and emerging media and channels of communication, entertainment and marketing, and the damage that this does to children’s perceptions and values.

The absence or inadequacy of timely and appropriate preventive and remedial action against abuse, exploitation and violence or any kind of distress whenever children are affected by civil disturbances and armed conflict, natural disasters or situations of

¹ UN Committee on Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13: Elimination of all forms of violence against children.

scarcity and/ or other conditions where security breaks down, or services and systems fail to operate.

The persistence of these risks and threats, despite the observance of a UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence against Children (2000-2010), and worldwide support for the child protection commitments made by the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in adopting the declaration and action plan for 'a World fit for Children' (2002);

The insufficient action of governments and society to comprehensively protect children against all abuse and neglect, and failure to ensure that all services and settings safeguard children against any such affliction or even such risks.

The disrespect and damage done to children and childhood, in both governmental and social action, when access to rights and protection is undermined by factors of identity and not safeguarded by correctives.

The hurt and alienation that children suffer in cases where the State and society fail to ensure equal access to rights and protection regardless of a gender perspective.

4. We assert the urgent and immediate need to:

Integrate principles, standards and measures in national planning processes to prevent and respond to violence against children;

Develop national strategies and plans of action to address, punish and overcome violence against children, with measurable, specific and time-bound goals and commitments.

Remove social and economic inequalities through sound policies and their execution;

Prohibit all forms of neglect, abuse and violence against children in all settings, through honest and accountable governance and by law and its enforcement;

Develop and establish reliable national data collection and responsible use of information on children; the lack of this results in insufficient knowledge or understanding of violence against children and its root causes.

Ensure comprehensive and restorative juvenile justice systems and mechanisms.

Set up independent commissions with authority to monitor, investigate and uphold child rights in all settings and to set standards in child protection.

Ensure the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

5. We welcome national, regional and international child protection initiatives and efforts of the past decade:

The appointment of children's rights commissions and desks in several countries in the Region;

Child protection policies, laws, and schemes in response to Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in several countries;

Setting up of juvenile justice systems in several countries;

Sensitisation of all service managers and providers and all those whose actions affect the security and well-being of children, to appreciate that each child and every childhood is special and worthy of respect and care.

6. We recognise that despite these advances:

There is denial in some countries about the scale of violence against children and certain forms of violence have social sanction;

Certain conditions and circumstances increase the vulnerability of some children, with reasons such as disability, gender, race, culture, community, migration, social and economic marginalisation.

Violence against children is hidden, unreported and under-recorded for many reasons including fear of ostracism and social acceptance of violence²;

² United Nations Study on Violence against Children - 2006

There is a need to reform the existing mechanisms for children to confidently report and raise issues of neglect and abuse.

Many countries are yet to frame and adopt national action plans on violence against children;

Laws and their enforcement are yet to be rights – based;

Some laws do not conform to accepted international standards and commitments such as UNCRC.

Perpetrators of violence against children are not convicted;

Prevention strategies are not given priority;

There is a need to improve the attitudes and skills of professionals' working with children;

7. We therefore urge:

Recognition of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and all forms of violence against children as a critical issue of justice and development in the Asia Pacific region;

That opportunity be ensured to all children to realise their full potential and enjoy the basic human rights of survival, development, protection and participation including nutrition, health care and education throughout childhood

The recognition and fulfillment by governments and all other stakeholders including parents, of their key role and responsibility to prevent maltreatment of children and protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence and discrimination;

The conscious creation of a caring attitude and approach in both authorities and society in all dealings with children, to be manifest in all actions affecting children's lives;

Enforcement of existing laws in an efficient and timely manner, and review of all laws not in conformity with UNCRC and/or other international standards.

Generation of public support for respecting and protecting children's rights.

The holding of a child in an institution must only be as a “last resort”, with standards of safety and care ensured. Family-based alternative care should be consciously explored and its standard guaranteed.

Education to change public attitudes & develop an inclusive caring culture; and promote non violent values.

Child labour is to be abolished and eradicated.

Silence on all forms of abuse and neglect of children must be brought to an end;
Countries must implement all provisions and recommendations of UN general comment No.13 (the Right of the Child to freedom from all forms of violence)

Ensure all organizations and institutions endorse the prevention of violence against children as a cross-cutting commitment.

Regard and respect the family as an institution and as the primary setting for the care and well-being of its children;

Establish a code of ethics to regulate and control adverse and negative portrayal of children and the depiction of violence as acceptable and even attractive in both traditional and emerging media and channels of communication, entertainment and marketing, and ensure required regulation and ethical standards.

8. We call upon all Governments

To ensure the following policies and measures, and on all those whose policies, programmes and activities affect the lives, status and condition of children to support these policies.

Ensure that children affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and/ or any condition or situation of scarcity or of failure of services and systems, are protected through timely and appropriate preventive and remedial action against abuse, exploitation and violence or any kind of distress.

Develop integrated plans for cross-sectoral/multi-sectoral action to address violence against children, as well as related conditions of risk of violence;

Strengthen national commitments and carry out time-bound and measurable strategies to prevent Violence against Children;

To accept and implement the concerns and recommendation of General Comment No. 13 issued by UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, calling for children's freedom from all forms of violence

Allocate adequate attention, resources and a healing approach for recovery and a restoration of an honourable place in the community and society;

Establish accessible mechanisms which are respectful of the child;

Define, prohibit and criminalise all acts of maltreatment of children in accord with internationally accepted principles and standards;

Recognise and address the harmful potential of certain social and cultural traditions and emerging values and practices and their influence on children. Identify address and correct forms of violence, which are socially accepted;

Set up juvenile justice systems and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place, operating and accountable;

Build community confidence in just governance by bringing all perpetrators of violence against children to justice³;

Ensure that persons convicted of violent offences and sexual abuse of children are prevented from working with children⁴;

Provide specialised training to investigative staff – police and the judiciary – and mandate this training under service rules for government employees and all service managers and providers whose work affects the child;

³ United Nations Study on Violence against Children - 2006

⁴ United Nations Study on Violence against Children - 2006

Evaluate all children's institutions at regular intervals, with children being involved and consulted in the evaluations;

Adapt and adopt "The international Guidelines for the Appropriate Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children" in all countries;

Progressively develop and establish children's participation in all measures and programs affecting their life and security and build the capacity and working approach of persons working with children;

Prioritise the prevention of Maltreatment of children by allocating adequate resources for awareness raising campaigns and mass education to change attitudes, of the public at large, on the perceptions of and the indifference to incidents of child abuse to build respect for children;

Ensure all children are registered immediately after their birth and take special measures to register all those up to the age of 18 years not yet registered;

Develop and implement systematic national data collection, analysis and monitoring, with due allocation of resources;

Work for the ratification and implementation of relevant international and regional conventions, statutes and rights standards; and strengthen regional and international commitment to protecting children.

Declaration & Pledge:

We, the participants at the 9th ISPCAN Asia Pacific Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, in New Delhi, representing the people of our many countries hereby declare our commitment to these aims and objectives, and pledge our resolve to stand against the neglect and abuse of children and to strive for achievement of child rights and the building of a caring community for every child, free of violence and discrimination.

New Delhi, 9th October 2011