



Stakeholder Consultation on Strengthening Child Protection System: A Collaborative Initiative by NACG EVAC India Delhi Chapter and Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights

On 27.6.2023 at the Indian Law Institute in collaboration with the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, NACG EVAC India (National Action Coordination Group to End Violence Against Children) Delhi Chapter successfully organized a comprehensive stakeholder consultation on strengthening the child protection system. The event aimed to engage key stakeholders and experts in a constructive dialogue to address challenges and devise effective strategies for safeguarding the rights and well-being of children.

The consultation brought together more than 80 participants representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, child rights workers, children, and relevant professionals. This collaborative effort fostered an inclusive and participatory approach, enabling a holistic understanding of the issues surrounding easy access to govt schemes and generating innovative solutions.

The event commenced with a keynote address by Shri Anurag Kundu Chairperson of DCPCR, who emphasized the significance of a robust child protection system and the collective responsibility to ensure every child's safety, dignity, and development. He highlighted the urgent need to address gaps in existing frameworks and explore collaborative approaches to provide easy access to different govt schemes meant for children.

The key panellist was Ms Nandini Maharaj - Additional Director of the Department of Education, Ms Ranjana Prasad, Member DCPCR Delhi, Shri Gaurav Saini, SDM Defense Colony, South East District Delhi, Mr Varun Pathak - Chairperson Central District, New Delhi, Mr Vishwajeet Ghosal, Director CHILDLINE Prayas NGO, Ms Helly Fur Kaur, Secretary DLSA, West District Tish Hazari.

Throughout the day, participants engaged in interactive sessions, panel discussions, facilitating knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices, and brainstorming of ideas. Key themes discussed included:

- Strengthening child protection laws and policies to address emerging challenges.
- Enhancing the role of communities, families, and schools in safeguarding children's rights.
- Improving coordination and cooperation among stakeholders in the child protection system.
- Enhancing access to quality child protection services and support.
- Enhancing child participation and promoting a child-friendly approach.

The stakeholder consultation also served as a platform for networking and forging new partnerships among diverse organizations and individuals committed to child protection. Participants expressed their commitment to continued collaboration and action, building upon the outcomes of the consultation to drive meaningful change at the policy, programmatic, and community levels.

Inaugural Session

The consultation meeting was initiated by Ms Madhavi Kotwal Samson, State Convenor, NACG EVAC, Delhi Chapter, with the welcome greeting of all the Honorary Guest of the Day.

As she requested the Chairperson (Mr. Sanjay Gupta) of NACG EVAC, India to come and provide an Insightful introduction about the NACG EVAC, India.

Opening remarks and sharing about NACG EVAC India

Mr Sanjay Gupta has provided details about the inception and functionality of NACG SAIEVAC. Explained that SAIEVAC, The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children is a SAARC Apex body which is an inter-governmental body with a vision that all children, girls and boys, throughout South Asia enjoy their right to an environment free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and discrimination. Eight SAARC countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India are working to ensure a strong child protection system and to make a violence-free environment.

In continuation of this, he shared that National Action and Coordination Group for Ending Violence against Children (NACG EVAC) India, is a country-level civil society platform of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), an apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The director of the Ministry of Women & Children Development is the Nodal officer for SAIEVAC NACG EVAC India presently has a total membership of 563 member organizations in 25 states of India with a strong 64 National Board Members, Executive Committee, and State Conveners. He included that NACG EVAC focuses on 5 critical thematic issues, Child Labor, Child Marriage, Child Trafficking, Corporal Punishment, Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, and two cross-cutting thematic issues Children with Disability and Child Participation.

Along with this, he said that in his leadership they have launched a series of state consultations, and are trying to create a common interest group that will work consistently on child protection & welfare.

After the introductory session, Mr Gupta invited Mr Anurag Kundu, Chairperson of DCPCR for the keynote address.

Keynote address by Mr Anurag Kundu, Chairperson of DCPCR

He shared that child protection is a multi-dimensional and complex issue that requires a holistic approach. It is not limited to just safeguarding children from abuse and exploitation but also encompasses ensuring access to education, healthcare, nutrition, and a safe living environment. Moreover, in the digital age, we face new challenges in protecting our children from online threats and cyberbullying.

Today, as we gather here, let us remember that this consultation is not a mere event to discuss policies and procedures. It is a platform to foster a genuine understanding of the challenges

faced by our children, to engage in open dialogue, and to collaborate on practical solutions. It is a moment for us to listen to the voices of the children themselves and empathize with their struggles. The child protection system in Delhi, like in many parts of the world, is facing numerous obstacles. From poverty and neglect to abuse and exploitation, our children confront a wide range of adversities. It is incumbent upon us to break the shackles that hinder their growth and protect them from harm. To achieve this, we must adopt a multi-faceted approach. We need to strengthen the support systems for vulnerable families, ensuring access to education, healthcare, and social services. Early intervention is critical in preventing issues from escalating to crisis levels, said Mr Kundu.

Ms. Ranjana Prasad, Member DCPCR

She shared that Delhi Commission has made a good effort in providing assistance to children but the area is much concerned and vast so all the efforts are too little but still we will continue with our efforts.

Further, she added that DCPCR has established a child-friendly complaint mechanism to ensure that children can easily report any violation of their rights. This mechanism provided a safe space for children to voice their concerns and seek appropriate redressal.

DCPCR utilized technology to enhance child protection efforts. This included setting up helplines, online counselling services, and digital platforms to reach out to children in need.

In the presence of Guests and all the dignitaries **A handbook for the Stakeholder released on the topic of the Prevention and Rehabilitation of Victims of Child Rights.**

DCPCR launched a handbook titled "Prevention and Rehabilitation of Victims of Child Marriage: A Handbook for Stakeholders." Recognising the urgent need to address the issue of child marriage, the Commission launched a handbook which highlights the roles of the stakeholders as per the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and the Delhi Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2009. These stakeholders include Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (SDMs), District Magistrates, Teachers, Child Welfare Committees, Police, District Child Protection Units and Anganwadi Workers. The Handbook has been written in uncomplicated language with each chapter dedicated to the role of a stakeholder. It will provide practical guidance on the relevant laws as well as give operational information.

Session 1: - on Easy Access to Govt Schemes for Vulnerable Children

Key Panellist

- Shri Varun Pathak, Chairperson Central District, New Delhi,
- Ms Nandini Maharaj, Assistant Director, Director of Education.
- Mr Gaurav Saini, SDM, Defence Colony, South East District, Delhi.
- Ms Pooja Singh, Project Head -CHETNA

Moderator –Mr. Sanjay Gupta

In the session at first Shri Varun Pathak was invited where to share efforts made in his area where the moderator requested, please provide us with the data exactly. He conveyed that as

of now we have no limits of help and in this regard, we have made a good effort under the Guidance of DCPCR for Children.

Highlights: -

- ⇒ Under Mission Vatsalya earlier in 2000 children helped now the number increased and this Financial Year number of beneficiaries increased and the number is 4000.
- ⇒ In case if child's parents are in incarcerated situation as per the situation dependency benefits are provided to children, (Tentative amount 10. Lac provided).
- ⇒ Along with this almost 200 children benefitted who have lost their single parent during covid under the Swawlamban scheme.

Shri Gaurav Saini – SDM, Defence Colony, South East District, Delhi.

- ⇒ As he shared Financial Remedies provided in his leadership for child Labor Rescue Operations and on his table, he always looks into this on priority.
- ⇒ Apart from this he conveyed that rescue Operations are not only the work of administrative officers, they are looking for Civil Society Organizations for their support.
- ⇒ In addition to this he also conveyed that in case civil society organizations looking for our cooperation please come and we will jointly find the solution.

Ms. Nandini Mahajan -Additional Director, Administration, Department of Education.

- ⇒ She shared about the existing Scheme Mission Buniyad and about the scheme's massive success, under this scheme 500+ teacher's trained and she also requested to everyone at least one time go through the department website because the syllabus content prepared with the support of Pratham Organization and there is very good content for foundation Literacy.
- ⇒ In this matter Chairperson DCPCR raised a query what's the department's plan for CCI home children is there any plan of inclusion?

In answer she said that inclusion of CCI home children is already in their plan on a pilot base the matter initiated soon they will plan for inclusion under the scheme.

- ⇒ In addition of the Mission Buniyad scheme, Moderator mentioned his point that audience are surprised but same level of things not translated at ground level and mostly people face issue because associated person in schools not aware with schemes related benefits so mostly people unable to avail the benefits of scheme. So kindly convey evting at ground level.
- ⇒ Apart from this Chair NACG requested her for few hours where Civil Society Organizations can discuss and jointly find solution to ensure child education in the society.
- ⇒ In addition of this he also requested that it will helpful if we get a solution through a single window. In response to this she shared that SSA representatives are in every district DEO office and if people reach there can easily get help.

Ms. Pooja Singh – Project Head CHETNA

- ⇒ She is heading CHETNA project in West DELHI, she expressed her immense gratitude to West Delhi District administration and special thanks to them.
- ⇒ She talked about the transparency and data sharing between the government and civil society organizations are crucial for understanding the needs of vulnerable children and tailoring services accordingly. Both parties should collaborate in collecting and analyzing relevant data to inform decision-making.
- ⇒ Adopt a child-friendly approaches that consider the perspectives and preferences of the children they aim to support while making any policies.
- ⇒ She shared her project challenges, ground realities and support of local administration to overcome the milestones, successful case studies and best practices of collaboration between civil society and government.
- ⇒ With the support of local administration now children got the benefit of Aadhar cards and as a result, in upcoming month good number of children will get admission.
- ⇒ Highlighted the unique contributions of civil society organizations in service delivery

After this some questions were raised from the children's side: -

- ⇒ As a child asked, they have listened that the 1098 number will close very soon in this situation how children will get help in the adverse scenario.
- ⇒ Another child asked what are the plan for the children who completed 8th grades under Mission Buniyad Scheme.
- ⇒ Archana asked if some children have passed out during covid but exactly they have not gone through the 8th Class syllabus how would they manage and is there any plan to mitigate the issue?

Assistant Director answered all the questions shared by the children.

Following are some key findings and proposed solutions during the sessions-

- The panellists stressed the importance of accurate identification and categorization of vulnerable children. Participants discussed the need for a unified database that integrates data from various departments and organizations to ensure that eligible children don't fall through the cracks.
- Many government schemes involve complex application procedures, which often deter vulnerable families from seeking assistance. The discussions focused on the urgent need to simplify the application processes and eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.
- The lack of awareness among vulnerable communities about available schemes emerged as a significant obstacle. Panelists suggested using various channels, including community centers, schools, and social media, to raise awareness and educate families about the benefits they are entitled to.
- Frontline workers, including social workers, teachers, and healthcare professionals, play a crucial role in identifying and supporting vulnerable children. The sessions highlighted the need for capacity-building programs to enhance their understanding of government schemes and eligibility criteria.
- Participants stressed the importance of inter-departmental collaboration to ensure holistic support for vulnerable children.
- It was decided to have one-stop resource centers at the community level, where families can access information and receive assistance in applying for various government schemes.

- Setting up a dedicated helpline to assist families with queries related to government schemes and guide them through the application process.

Sessions highlighted the importance of streamlining the process to ensure that support reaches those who need it the most. By simplifying procedures, improving awareness, and fostering inter-departmental collaboration, policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and efficient system that caters to the needs of vulnerable children effectively. The proposed solutions offer a roadmap to achieve this goal and provide a better future for the most marginalized members of our society.

Second 2: - Panel Discussion on Child Marriage and Discussion on Ensuring Support to Vulnerable Children

Key Panellists

Mrs Helly Fur Kaur, Secretary DALSA, West District, Tis Hazari.

Mr Vishwajeet Ghosal, Director of CHILDLINE PRAYAS NGO

Shri Gaurav Saini, SDM, Defence Colony, South East District, Delhi

Shri Salam Khan, Sr. Consultant DCPCR

Moderator – Madhvi Kotwal Samson

A panel discussion on child marriage and ensuring support to vulnerable children was held at ILI. The session was organized with the aim of raising awareness about the detrimental impacts of child marriage and exploring ways to provide better support to vulnerable children. Distinguished experts, policymakers, NGOs, and community members participated in the discussion to share their insights and experiences on these critical issues.

The panel commenced with an overview of child marriage, highlighting its prevalence in various regions and its adverse effects on the lives of young girls and boys. Discussions revolved around the root causes of child marriage, including poverty, lack of education, gender inequality, and harmful cultural practices.

Majorly CHILD Marriage concerns discuss in the Panel as the case reporting ratio is low in DELHI and an opinion has been developed that there is no child marriage sustaining in DELHI.

In this point, **Mr Vishwajeet Ghosal** shared that In Delhi mostly the population is migrated so for the marriage ceremony they relocate to their paternal location and here the case is not reported. Some data we get once they come back and the child got pregnant and come in Mohalla clinic and nearby PHC area.

In continuation of this **Shri Salam Khan Sr. Consultant DCPCR** mentioned his point in the absence of awareness and lack of proper coordination we are not aware of data because as per his data, 103 child marriage cases were reported in his record. For the same, he has also written to all district concerned authorities for further procedure.

In addition to this Mr. Gaurav Saini mentioned his point that SDM has authorization but their reporting mechanism is not much strong so in their awareness there is no child marriage in DELHI and the data is surprising for him. As there are such provisions before 18 a child can

cancel their marriage and that is legitimate. He also added in case if he gets the information, they will definitely take action. He provided a number to complain about child marriage - 931551393.

The second part of the panel discussion focused on strategies to ensure comprehensive support for vulnerable children, including those who have been affected by child marriage, domestic violence, poverty, and other challenging circumstances.

Participants acknowledged the importance of ongoing awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts to combat child marriage and protect the rights of vulnerable children. Media, civil society, were recognized as essential allies in driving social change.

In continuation of this **Mrs. Helly Fur Kaur** shared that in her department there is lots of provision but in the absence of awareness, people do not get benefit. As she pointed that she is surprised and pleased to participate in this discussion because instead of discussing the problem the platform discussing solution and approach is completely solution based.

She shared about DALSA have all the legal mechanism and remedial if people report they will look into that on priority also **share DALSA Helpline Number -1516**, and **CP Gram Portal**.

Question from Civil Society Organization: -

Ms Sandhya -Miracle Foundation

As she pointed out the prevention plan for the issue in response got an answer from the panel that now the commission not only focuses on the child but also works with the child's mother to minimize the issue.

Member DCPCR also shared about HRS system to mitigate the risk, also introduced ERS (Early Morning System). Under this school-going children can track.

Shri Sanjay Gupta Chairperson NACG EVAC India and Director CHETNA NGO shared that ending violence against children is our core mandate. The consultation gave many fruitful suggestions such as having quarterly meetings of NGOs and the education department to discuss issues related to access to education, a single window approach for concerns and issues related to school admission, public distribution system (PDS) deprived family assessment, creating awareness on child marriage prevention and schemes at the grassroots level, sharing best practices of Ciss project implementation in other districts of Delhi as well as in states etc.

Closing Remarks and Way Forward

Based on the insights gained from the stakeholder consultation, a comprehensive action plan is proposed to strengthen the child protection system:

- Establish a task force comprising representatives from relevant government agencies, NGOs, and community leaders. Regular meetings and collaboration will ensure a coordinated effort to address child protection issues.
- Improve data collection and analysis mechanisms to identify trends, gaps, and emerging issues related to child protection. Regular monitoring and evaluation will enable evidence-based decision-making.

- Establish a seamless interagency referral system to ensure timely and efficient communication between different service providers, enabling holistic support for children in need.
- There was a consensus among stakeholders on the importance of focusing on preventive measures rather than solely reactive responses. Investing in early intervention and support services can mitigate the risks of child abuse and neglect.
- Stakeholders stressed the significance of an integrated approach to child protection. Services such as healthcare, education, law enforcement, and social welfare need to work collaboratively to identify and address child protection concerns effectively.
- Engaging and empowering communities are crucial elements in a robust child protection system. Building community awareness, promoting positive parenting practices, and involving local organizations in safeguarding children can make a significant difference.

The consultation concluded with closing remarks by Sh. Ashok Kumar Executive Director of Dr. A.V. Baliga Memorial Trust, expressed gratitude to all participants for their valuable contributions and emphasised the importance of sustained collaboration to ensure the well-being and rights of children.

Moving forward, it is essential to sustain the momentum gained from the discussion and translate ideas into actionable initiatives that make a lasting impact on the lives of children affected by child marriage and vulnerability.