



অসমত শিশু শ্ৰমিক প্ৰতিৰোধ আৰু নিৰ্মূল শীৰ্ষক ৰাজ্যিক পৰ্যায়ৰ আলোচনা চক্ৰ

STATE LEVEL CONSULTATION

PREVENTION AND ERADICATION OF CHILD LABOUR IN ASSAM

NACG-EVAC India is a country-level civil society forum of SAIEVAC

and

Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights

19 February 2024 | Grand Bhabendra Alay Beltola Guwahati Assam



Organized by – NACG-EVAC Assam in collaboration with collaboration with ASCPCR supported by International Labour Organisation, New Delhi

Introduction

- **About the program**

The State Level Consultation Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour in Assam emerged as a pivotal platform, orchestrating a meaningful engagement among diverse stakeholders representing various organizations, government departments, NGOs, and marginalized groups within the state. This collaborative endeavor aimed to deliberate on pressing matters and brainstorm viable solutions concerning the pervasive issue of child labor.

The consultation witnessed active participation from key stakeholders, including officials from crucial departments such as Women and Child Welfare, District Child Protection Units, Police, Labour, Education, Juvenile Welfare, NGOs, State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), International Labour Organization and NACG EVAC India. By bringing together representatives from these entities, the consultation fostered a comprehensive dialogue and facilitated the exchange of insights, experiences, and best practices.

At its core, the initiative sought to address the multifaceted challenges associated with child labor by leveraging collective expertise and resources. The collaborative efforts were guided by a shared commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children across Assam. Through structured discussions, participants explored innovative strategies, policy interventions, and grassroots initiatives aimed at preventing and eliminating child labor in all its forms.

Crucially, the consultation was executed by State Chapter of the National Action and Coordination Group against Violence against Children (NACG EVAC India), in collaboration with ASCPCR underscoring the importance of synergistic partnerships in driving sustainable change. Additionally, the initiative received invaluable support from the International Labour Organization (ILO), India Office, further bolstering its impact and reach.

- **About NACG EVAC India**

NACG EVAC India is the Civil Society Platform of the of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), with national mechanisms in all 8 countries of South Asia. The NACGs are constituted by child rights organizations including entities that promote children's rights and have the crucial role of coordinating the EVAC agenda of SAIEVAC at the National level particularly with the SAIEVAC Government mechanisms. NACG EVAC India EC (Executive Committee) constitutes the decision making body and have the role of oversight for the NACG including setting national agenda or programme of action. The chairing organization serves as the National Secretariat and currently Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA), is mandated with this responsibility.

Objectives

- Championing children's rights advocacy and awareness campaigns across India.
- Enhancing the connectivity and collaboration of civil society organizations nationwide to amplify efforts in combating child labor, trafficking, marriage, abuse, exploitation, and corporal punishment.
- Prioritizing child safety through the proactive engagement of government agencies, institutions, and professional bodies.
- Fostering inclusivity by actively engaging children's perspectives in regional, state, and national initiatives for action, advocacy, and shared learning.
- Crafting a strategic blueprint for the National Action and Coordination Group (NACG), focusing on bolstering its effectiveness and impact in addressing child welfare issues.

Session Details¹

1. Lighting of the lamp and welcome address

This symbolic act, which stood for the spirit of curiosity, unity, and the spark of knowledge, marked the beginning of a profound journey towards enlightenment. The gathering was addressed by Gitika Dutta Sarma, Vice- Chairperson NACG EVAC India and enveloped in a cocoon of warmth and enthusiasm thanks to the lamp's tranquil radiance, which also created an inspirational and peaceful mood. The soft flicker of the flame illuminated the room, guiding the attendees towards a shared objective of addressing the serious problem of child labour in Assam.

¹ The detailed session plan is attached as Annexure

Following the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, Dr. Shyamal Prasad Saikia, a highly esteemed figure in the community and the Chairperson of ASCPCR (Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights), delivered a heartfelt welcome address. Drawing upon his extensive experience as a retired IPS officer and his unwavering commitment to child welfare, Dr. Saikia set the tone for the consultation with his words of wisdom and encouragement.



Dr. Saikia's welcome address served as a poignant reminder of the solemn responsibility entrusted upon each participant to uphold the rights and dignity of every child in Assam. His impassioned plea for unity and solidarity resonated deeply with the audience, inspiring them to approach the consultation with a sense of purpose and determination.

2. Shri Sanjay Gupta, Chairperson (NACG EVAC India)

In his address, Shri Sanjay Gupta, Chairperson of NACG EVAC India, articulated a clear vision for the day's discussions, focusing on the urgent need to eradicate child labor through concerted efforts and comprehensive strategies. He emphasized the gravity of the issue at hand and underscored the significance of the collaborative endeavor ahead. Shri Gupta delineated the overarching theme of the consultation, highlighting the multifaceted approach that would be adopted to address the complex issue of child labor. He emphasized the importance of understanding the various laws, provisions, and actions already in place to combat child labor, laying the groundwork for a detailed exploration of potential solutions. Throughout his speech, Shri Gupta conveyed a sense of urgency, recognizing the limited time available for deliberations



and urging participants to remain focused and committed to the cause. He expressed confidence in the collective capacity to achieve success in eliminating child labor, provided there was a steadfast dedication to legal action, monitoring, and implementation of measures. Acknowledging the valuable contributions of the organizers and participating organizations, Shri Gupta extended his gratitude for their support and collaboration. He expressed optimism about the outcomes of the consultation and wished for its resounding success, signaling his confidence in the collective resolve to tackle the issue of child labor head-on. In setting the context and overview of the collaboration between NACG EVAC India and the International Labour Organization (ILO), Shri Gupta laid the foundation for a fruitful exchange of ideas and strategies to combat child labor effectively. His words served as a rallying call to action, inspiring participants to work tirelessly towards the shared goal of creating a safer and more equitable future for children everywhere.

3. Shri Gadiraju Narasimhan, ILO Official

In his address, Gadiraju Narasimhan provided a historical perspective on the origins of the International Labour Organization (ILO), emphasizing its longstanding commitment to addressing labor issues, including child labor. He highlighted the pivotal role played by ILO in responding to labor unrest and exploitation, particularly in the aftermath of World War I. Narasimhan underscored the persistent challenge of child labor despite significant progress made in formal sectors, citing India's achievement in reducing child labor in formal sectors as a notable example. Narasimhan acknowledged India's ratification of important ILO conventions, specifically Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labor and Convention 138 on the minimum age for employment. He emphasized the need for India to translate its ratification commitments into tangible actions, including legislative, policy, and enforcement measures, particularly in the informal economy where the challenge of child labor persists. Highlighting India's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Narasimhan emphasized the ambitious target of eliminating all forms of child labor by 2030. While acknowledging the ambitious nature of this goal, he stressed the importance of concerted efforts and coordinated action from all stakeholders to achieve it. Narasimhan expressed gratitude for the initiative taken to convene the event, recognizing its significance in fostering dialogue and generating concrete action items to address the issue of child labor. He urged participants to use the occasion to engage in meaningful discussions and brainstorming sessions, with the aim of identifying actionable steps to combat child labor effectively.

In conclusion, Narasimhan conveyed his best wishes for the success of the event, expressing hope that it would yield tangible outcomes and contribute to advancing efforts to eliminate child labor.

4. Presentation on Status of Child Labour in Assam by Shri Ajoy Kr Dutta

In his presentation on the status of child labor in Assam, Shri Ajoy Kr Dutta highlighted several key issues and recommendations. He began by acknowledging the presence of dignitaries and the

importance of the one-day consultation on child labor in collaboration with CPCS. Shri Dutta identified various reasons for child labor in Assam, including irregularities and victimization. He described Assam as a dynamic cultural landscape but noted the prevalence of child labor, particularly in the informal sector. Migration between districts often disrupts children's education, leading to their involvement in labor activities. Child laborers face exploitation, including sexual exploitation and hazardous working conditions, resulting in physical injuries and even death. Preventive measures outlined by Shri Dutta include skill development programs and policies to improve economic conditions for parents. Recommendations from the Commission emphasize empowering marginalized communities through awareness programs and investments in education infrastructure. Measures such as subsidized scholarships and legal actions against high fees aim to facilitate access to education for children from impoverished backgrounds. He highlighted challenges in implementing schemes and policies, such as the lack of an independent mechanism to identify child laborers and discrepancies in data reporting. He emphasized the need for regular inspections, monitoring, and enforcement of penalties to combat child labor effectively. The Commission also recommended focusing on adolescent girls who often replace their parents as laborers and called for data-driven approaches to understand the factors contributing to child labor in Assam.

In conclusion, Shri Ajoy Kr Dutta underscored the importance of government schemes and collaborative efforts to ensure the well-being and future prospects of children in Assam. He expressed hope for the eradication of child labor through concerted action and thanked the dignitaries and participants for their support.

5. Smt. Anamika Tewari, Labour Commissioner of Assam

Anamika Tewari, the Labour Commissioner of Assam, began her speech by extending greetings to the esteemed dignitaries, acknowledging their presence at the state-level consultation on the prevention and elimination of child labor. She expressed gratitude to the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children for organizing the event and providing her with the opportunity to address the audience. Tewari emphasized her commitment to eliminating child labor in Assam, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders to achieve this goal. She stressed the need for unity and coordinated action, recognizing that individual efforts alone may not be sufficient to address such a complex issue. The Commissioner discussed various initiatives undertaken by the Labor Department to combat child labor, including awareness campaigns, rescue drives, capacity building of stakeholders, and rehabilitation efforts. She highlighted the formation of a child labor rehabilitation fund in every district and the successful rescue operations conducted by labor inspectors.

Tewari underscored the vulnerability of children to exploitation and abuse, citing poverty and lack of education as contributing factors to child labor. She emphasized the importance of documentation and rehabilitation in preventing children from falling back into exploitative labor situations. The Commissioner acknowledged the challenges posed by migrant labor and

emphasized the need to prioritize rehabilitation efforts alongside rescue operations. She called for renewed focus and commitment from all stakeholders to empower children and create a society where they can thrive without facing the scourge of child labor.

In conclusion, Tewari thanked the audience for their participation and expressed hope that the consultation would yield fruitful outcomes in the ongoing fight against child labor. She reiterated her commitment to protecting the rights of children and creating a better future for the youth of Assam.

6. Dr. Vikram Srivastava, Technical Advisor, SAIEVAC

Dr. Vikram Srivastava, the Technical Advisor for SAIEVAC, began his speech by highlighting the significance of SAIEVAC as an intergovernmental body focused on ending violence against children. He mentioned the regional action plans developed by SAIEVAC with contributions from member countries, emphasizing the importance of effective implementation of laws and policies related to child labor.

Key points for addressing the issue of child labor effectively:

1. **Effective Implementation of Laws and Policies:** He stressed the importance of enforcing existing laws and policies related to child labor.
2. **Focus on Education:** Srivastava emphasized the role of education in preventing child labor, mentioning initiatives to raise the age of education to 18 to keep children away from the labor market.
3. **Developmental Perspective:** He urged for a broader perspective on child labor, integrating it into larger development agendas at both national and state levels.
4. **Family Support:** Srivastava highlighted the importance of addressing family issues to reduce child labor, mentioning social security schemes and family-centric approaches.
5. **Data Utilization:** He emphasized the importance of using data to identify vulnerable families and develop evidence-based policies and interventions.
6. **Capacity Building:** Srivastava stressed the need for investing in the capacity building of implementing bodies and individuals to improve the implementation of child labor policies and programs.
7. **Coordination:** Finally, he underscored the importance of coordination at regional, national, and local levels to ensure effective implementation and avoid duplication of efforts.

In conclusion, Srivastava reiterated the importance of concerted efforts and investment in addressing child labor, emphasizing the role of education, data-driven policies, and capacity building in achieving meaningful change.

7. Shri B.K. Goel, Special Monitor, NHRC

In his speech, Shri B.K. Goel, representing NHRC, began by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the program. He acknowledged the presence of various esteemed individuals from different sectors, including government officials, representatives from women

and child development, members from various commissions, and attendees from civil society organizations. He commended the efforts of the organizing committee for hosting such an important event. Goel highlighted the diverse social structures across different regions of India, particularly focusing on his experiences in Haryana. He shared his commitment to discussing positive initiatives while acknowledging the prevalence of negative aspects, emphasizing the need for sensitizing society about critical issues like child labor. Shri Goel then delved into the alarming statistics regarding child labor in India and the South Asian region, citing reports that rank India poorly in terms of child labor prevalence. He identified poverty, lack of education, gender discrimination, natural disasters, and the demand for cheap labor as key factors contributing to the persistence of child labor. Emphasizing the importance of a multi-departmental approach, he stressed the need for coordination among various government departments, including education, health, labor, and law enforcement. He highlighted the significance of identifying and connecting with out-of-school children, as well as providing livelihood skills to parents to address the root causes of child labor. He also touched upon the need for swift legal action against perpetrators of child labor, advocating for efficient trials and effective laws to deter such practices. He underscored the severity of child labor, likening it to cancer and emphasizing the urgency of collective efforts to eradicate it from society.



Concluding his speech, Shri B.K. Goel urged attendees to prioritize the well-being and rights of children, emphasizing the need for concerted action and coordination among all stakeholders. He reiterated the importance of sensitization and proactive measures to combat child labour effectively.

8. Technical Session 1: Ankit Saikia, Labour Inspector

Ankit Saikia, a labor inspector, discussed the initiatives taken by the Labor Department of Assam to combat child labor. He highlighted the importance of regular inspections, task force drives, and the use of the PENCIL portal to file complaints against child labor. Saikia emphasized the need for collaboration with other agencies and the provision of support schemes for rescued children to prevent their re-entry into the labor force.

9. Technical Session 1: Ranjan Mahanty, NACG EVAC India

Ranjan Mahanty, representing a non-governmental organization focused on child rights, underscored the importance of education and family strengthening in eradicating child labor. He

discussed initiatives such as Mission Vatsalya and emphasized the need for coordinated efforts between departments and legislation to address the issue effectively.

10. Technical Session 2: Jyotishmita Sarma, District Legal Service Authority, Kamrup

Jyotishmita Sarma, a legal expert, highlighted the adverse effects of child labor on children's well-being and underscored the need for a strong legal framework to combat the issue effectively. She discussed the challenges posed by organized begging and bonded labor and stressed the importance of community-based support systems and regular labor inspection drives to address child labor comprehensively.

11. Anamika Suresh, Aakshar Foundation

Anamika Suresh, representing a foundation focused on education, discussed the organization's efforts to integrate child laborers into the school education system. She outlined seven models implemented by the foundation, including foundational literacy, vocational training, and sustainable energy sources, aimed at providing holistic support to vulnerable children and empowering them through education.

A case study sharing session was initiated by Mr. Pranmoy Kr Sarma, Secretary Society for Human Development, Nalbari where he has explained about the different Child labour residing in Sarothi- a home for Children and their potential in different fields like Art and Craft, Music, dance and drama. Three Children from Sarothi also explained about their interest for higher studies near future if they get any opportunities from any organizations.

12. Valedictory Session

In the valedictory session chaired by Shyamal Prasad Saikia, Phanindra Kumar Buzarbaruah Member ASCPCR, B.K. Goel, Gadiraju Narasimhan, Sanjay Gupta, and Vikram Srivastava, the focus was on sharing success stories of three child champions who were rescued from the clutches of child labor and are now under the care of Sarothi- a home for children under Society for Human Development. These survivors shared their personal experiences and the positive trajectory their lives have taken since being rescued. They highlighted the hardships they faced while working, including verbal and physical abuse, the loss of their childhood, exposure to substance abuse, and discrimination for not attending school like other children. Despite their past ordeals, the children expressed happiness and gratitude for being rescued and mainstreamed into school. They also shared their aspirations for high-level careers, such as becoming police officers or government officials.

Following the survivors' testimonies, a panel discussion brought together to discuss the



complexities of reporting on child labor. The panel emphasized the importance of addressing sensitive issues like child labor and advocated for amplifying crucial messages to raise awareness and drive societal change.

Throughout the day-long event, various strategies and best practices were discussed to combat child labor effectively. These included intensified monitoring to ensure children access education, targeted campaigns to raise awareness, investment in improving the quality of education, implementation of skill development programs for parents, strengthening monitoring systems, grassroots mobilization, and ensuring the implementation of relevant laws.

Way Forward

The way forward emphasized collaboration among different departments, involving civil society organizations and media partners, conducting ongoing research to gather data, and providing rehabilitation and counseling services for child labor survivors.

The Labour Department committed to supporting convergence meetings and allied departments agreed to conduct research to gather data on the prevalence and causes of child labor to refine strategies and track progress effectively.

GLIMPSES:



Group photo of Participants in the consultation



Dr. Shyamal Prasad Saikia, Chairperson of ASCPCR (Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights)

Annexure: Agenda & Speakers

| 10.00 AM–10.30AM---Registration | | |
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| Inaugural Session | | |
| Time | Activity | Responsibility/Facilitator |
| 10.30 A.M – 10.40 A.M | Lighting of the Lamp and Felicitation of Dignitaries | All the panelist |
| 10.40 A.M – 10.50 A.M | Welcome Address | Dr. Shyamal Prasad Saikia , IPS (Retd.) Chairperson, ASCPCR |
| 10.50 A.M –11.00 A.M | Introduction of NACG EVAC India and Setting the context and Overview of the collaboration between NACG EVAC India and the International Labour Organization (ILO) | Shri Sanjay Gupta Chairperson (NACG EVAC India) |
| 11.00 A.M –11.10 A.M | ILO and its Commitment to India for combating Child Labour | Shri. Gadiraju Narasimhan ILO Official |
| 11.10 A.M – 11.20 A.M | Status of Child Labour in Assam context | Shri. Ajoy Kr Dutta Member ASCPCR |
| 11.20 A.M – 11.30 A.M | Speech by Guest | Shri B. K. Goel Special Monitor National Human Rights Commission |
| 11.30 A.M- 11.40 A.M | Speech by Guest | Smt. Anamika Tewari , ACS Commissioner of Labour Labour Welfare Department |
| 11.40 A.M –11.50 AM | Speech by Guest | Dr. Vikram Srivastava , Technical Advisor SAIEVAC |
| 11.50 A.M – 12.00 P.M | Speech by Guest of Honour | Shri. Bhubaneswar Kalita Hon'ble M.P, Rajya Sabha |
| 12.00 A.M – 12.10 P.M | Speech by Chief Guest | Shri. Pallab Lochan Das Hon'ble M.P, Lok Sabha |
| 12.10 P.M – 12.20 P.M | Vote of Thanks & Group Photograph | State Convener NACG EVAC Assam Chapter |
| Tea Break (12.20 P.M – 12.45 P.M) | | |
| Technical Session - I | | |
| 12.45 P.M – 1.00 P.M | Topic : Keynote Address on Eradication of Child Labour in Assam & Initiatives of the Labour Department in Assam By –Shri. Ankit Saikia, Labour Inspector , Kamrup (M) | Chaired by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smt. Janki Khaund, Member, ASCPCR • Smt. Mousumi Brahma, Member, ASCPCR • Shri. Ranjan Mahanty, National Board Member, NACG EVAC India |
| 1.00 P.M – 1.15 P.M | Topic : Initiative of Police Department in combating child labour in Assam By –Official from Assam Police | |
| 1.15 P.M – 1.30 P.M | Topic : Initiative of DWCD in combating Child Labour in Assam By – <i>Official from WCD</i> | |
| Lunch (1.30 P.M – 2.30 P.M) | | |
| Technical Session - II | | |

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|---|--|---|
| 2.30 P.M –3.15 P.M | <p>Breaking Chains: Unveiling Strategies to end Child Labour – A panel discussion with Officials from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ District / State Legal Service Authority ➤ Department of Education ➤ NGO | <p>Presentation by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smt. Jyotismita Sarma District Legal Service Authority, Kamrup • Shri. Raheswar Lakra, State Programme Associate, SSA <p>Chaired by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shri. K. Pradip Kumar Chairperson, SCPCR, Manipur • Smt. Bandana Sasoni Member, ASCPCR |
| 3.15 P.M –4.00 P.M | Sharing Best Practices to Eliminate Child Labour in Assam & Open discussion | <p>Chaired by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smt. Rilanjana Talukdar Member, ASCPCR • Dr. Vikram Srivastava, Technical Advisor SAIEVAC |
| Valedictory session, Sharing of success story by Child Participant and Way forward | | |
| 4.00 P.M – 5.00 P.M | <p>Valedictory Speech &Way Forward: Shri. Phanindra Bujar Baruah , Member, ASCPCR</p> | <p>Chaired by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Shyamal Prasad Saikia, IPS (Retd.) Chairperson, ASCPCR • Shri. Ajoy Kumar Dutta, Member, ASCPCR • Shri B. K. Goel, Special Monitor, National Human Rights Commission • Shri. Gadiraju Narasimhan, ILO representative • Shri Sanjay Gupta, Chairperson (NACG EVAC India) • Dr. Vikram Srivastava, Technical Advisor SAIEVAC |
| Closure of the Programme | | |