

## Report

# Consultation on Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour in West Bengal NACG – EVAC India

### 1. Basic Detail

In furtherance of strengthening 8.7 Alliance and in Collaboration with NACG-EVAC India Consultation was conducted on Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour in West Bengal. The strategy is to roll out the activities that will contribute to the realization of the objectives set above while ensuring the additional strengthening of the collaborative efforts around vision of 8.7 Alliance and the work of the NACG State Chapters in 8 states of India.

**Venue** – Hotel The Stadel, Kolkata

**Date** – 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 2023



### 2. Introduction

#### • About Program

State level Stakeholder Consultation are conducted as a meaningful engagement with children, women, adolescents, minority groups and other relevant stakeholders to deliberate on key matters and brainstorm potential solutions pertaining to the issues of child Labour within the state. The key participants for the stakeholder consultations includes Government officials, SCPCR, Labour Officer and other government line departments such as the department of women and child, labor department, state labor commissioner, Police officer, State Commission, NGOs, state child protection society etc. At the state level the activities was executed in consultation with State Chapter of NACG EVAC India. The whole initiative has been supported by ILO, India Office.



#### • About NACG EVAC

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 organisations 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.

### 3. Objectives

- To roll out the Regional Action Plan to End All Forms of Child Labour in South Asia (2021-2025 draft) reviewed and formulated in December 2022 in Nepal
- To advocate for and raise awareness about children's rights in India.
- To strengthen civil society networking at all levels throughout the nation to increase national commitment and awareness to stop child labor, child trafficking, child marriage, sexual abuse, and exploitation, as well as corporal punishment.
- To make child safety a public priority by facilitating the active and proactive operations of government machinery, institutions, and professional bodies.
- To promote an inclusive environment by addressing issues involving voices of children at regional, state, and national platforms for action, advocacy, and collective learning.
- To establish a strategy for NACG emphasizing the way forward for strengthening the NACG



### 4. Speakers

**Mr. Meghendra Banerjee**, Chief of Programs at Child in Need Institution (CINI) inaugurated the session expressing gratitude, expressing gratitude and thanks to EVAC team, acknowledging the presence of dignitaries, district representatives, and delegates from various organizations.

**Shri Manabendra Nath Mondal**, the Convenor of NACG EVAC, West Bengal, set the context of the program by informing about the current landscape of child labour in everyday life and exploring the perspectives of the government, academic institutions, NGOs, and society at large on this pressing issue.



**Shri Sanjay Gupta** informed about the NACG EVAC India i.e., a country-level civil society forum of the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), an apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and shared an insights into the collaboration between NACG EVAC India and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**Dr. Rinchen Chopel**, Director General of SAIEVAC, joined the online session to introduce SAIEVAC. He focused on the critical issue of violence against children, particularly emphasizing child labour, ongoing social movement, urgency of addressing the pervasive issue to create a safer world, creation of a universal platform, reformation of Sustainable development goals(SDGs) to better serve the children wellbeing.

**Mr. Victor Joseph shared** emphasized on the need of strengthening education policies, . change in the landscape of children rights, crucial role of education, stating that "school is the best place to work for a child" for a better future. Despite government and NGO initiatives, he emphasized the necessity of addressing these changes and the associated challenges.



**Mr. Banerjee** informed about the evolving nature of the definition of child labour, mirroring the changing dynamics of society. He focused on the holistic approach comprehensive understanding of the issue and consideration of factors such as climate change, gender issues, and poverty contributing to the circumstances leading to child labour.

**Smt. Sudeshna Roy**, Chairperson of WBCPCR, in the session online highlighted on the gravity of child labour, noting its interconnectedness with the problem of child marriage. Impact of Covid and offered innovative suggestions to promote awareness, including the promotion of a universal campaign through mass media. Thereafter technical session was conducted revolving around devising a cohesive framework to eliminate child labour and present it as a model structure for other states to adopt.



**Dr. Vikram Srivastava**, Regional Advisor, SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat, shared the details as to the Regional Action Plan to end All Forms of Child Labour in South Asia 2021-2025, as agreed during SAIEVAC December 2022 Nepal Summit for awareness and deliberations.





**Smt. Mahua Sur Roy**, Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee, Kolkata, initiated the discussion on enforcement of mechanism for elimination of child labour, strengthening existing laws and systems addressing the issue.

**Mr. Sibasish Das**, a member of the Child Welfare Committee (North 24 Parganas), shared insights from his experience with rehabilitation methods, significant challenges posed by poverty and migration in addressing the issue at hand, lack of clarity on Victim Compensation Act's at the district level.

**Ms. Dola DeyMitra**, a member of the Juvenile Justice Board in Kolkata, articulated a poignant concern about the pervasive issue of child labour and their engagement in criminal world. Stressing the financial desperation that compels children into work and becoming CCL (Child in Conflict with Law).

**Dr. Subhrajyoti Mukherjee** distinguished Mental Health & Gender Consultant at Samikshani Equi-diversity Foundation, delivered a compelling discourse on the profound impact of mental health changes during adolescence on the prevalence of child labour.

Post lunch, panel discussion brought together esteemed media professionals to shed light on the intricate dynamics of reporting on child labor followed by a panel discussion with NACG Members and NGO Representative from West Bengal. The Media Professional panel comprised of

1. Mr. Biswajit Das - Head, Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication, Maharaja Mahindra Chandra College, Calcutta University:
2. Mr. Saptarshi Som - News Editor, News 18 Bangla:
3. Mr. Souvik Chongder - Director, Editor, Global Climate Care, Faculty, Kidderpore College, Journalism Dept:
4. Smt. Deeksha Bhuyan - Independent Journalist



## 5. Conclusion and Way Forward

The Consultation broadly discussed the following during the day-long event;

- The need for a Convergence approach to prevention and elimination of child labour especially focusing on the Rescue and rehabilitation of child labour.



- There is need for a comprehensive and ethical approach to advocate for and raise awareness about children's rights in India.
  - Awareness raising for stakeholders on child labour topics.
  - Educational attainment of children with equitable access
- While discussing the Legal and policy landscape of child labour in India the implementation of Social Security Schemes and provisions such as Sponsorship and Aftercare under the JJ Act were discussed that can work well for both family strengthening and mainstreaming of children
  - Access to vocational training opportunities for adolescents
  - Access to social protection schemes of the Governments
  - Sensitization of stakeholders to issues of child labour
  - Capacity development of stakeholders on elimination of child labour.
- The ILO standards covering the C 136 and C 182.
- Role and Capacity development of different Stakeholders including the following
  - private sector
  - civil society
  - Panchayat Raj institution
  - workers and employers organizations
- Possible Strategies for accelerating the achievement of Target 8.7 of SDG Framework.
- Need for a comprehensive and ethical approach to journalism, particularly when dealing with issues as sensitive as child labor: Consideration of preserving the dignity of those involved, navigating challenges imposed by external pressures, leveraging media convergence to

amplify the message and illuminated role media plays in shaping perceptions, advocating for justice, and fostering societal change in the realm of child labor

- Need for a comprehensive approach, relying solely on the prosecution of employers would be an ideal strategy to tackle the issue.
- Urgent need of addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by child labor, emphasizing the significance of both physical and mental health considerations.

### Way Forward

- Assistant Labour Commissioner has promised all possible support to CSO and NACG Partners in the State when it comes to Child Labour issues including periodic review meetings etc
- Possible collaboration with the University especially on Mental Health. Professor, Law hinted towards possible collaboration with NUJS Law School (National University for Judicial Sciences) on assessment of Judicial System and Child Labour.
- Media sensitization for better and positive coverage of child labour rescue cases and rehabilitations. It was proposed by the Media persons that efforts must be made so that media reports child labour rescue issues as a success story showing our efforts toward curbing the menace of child labour.

