



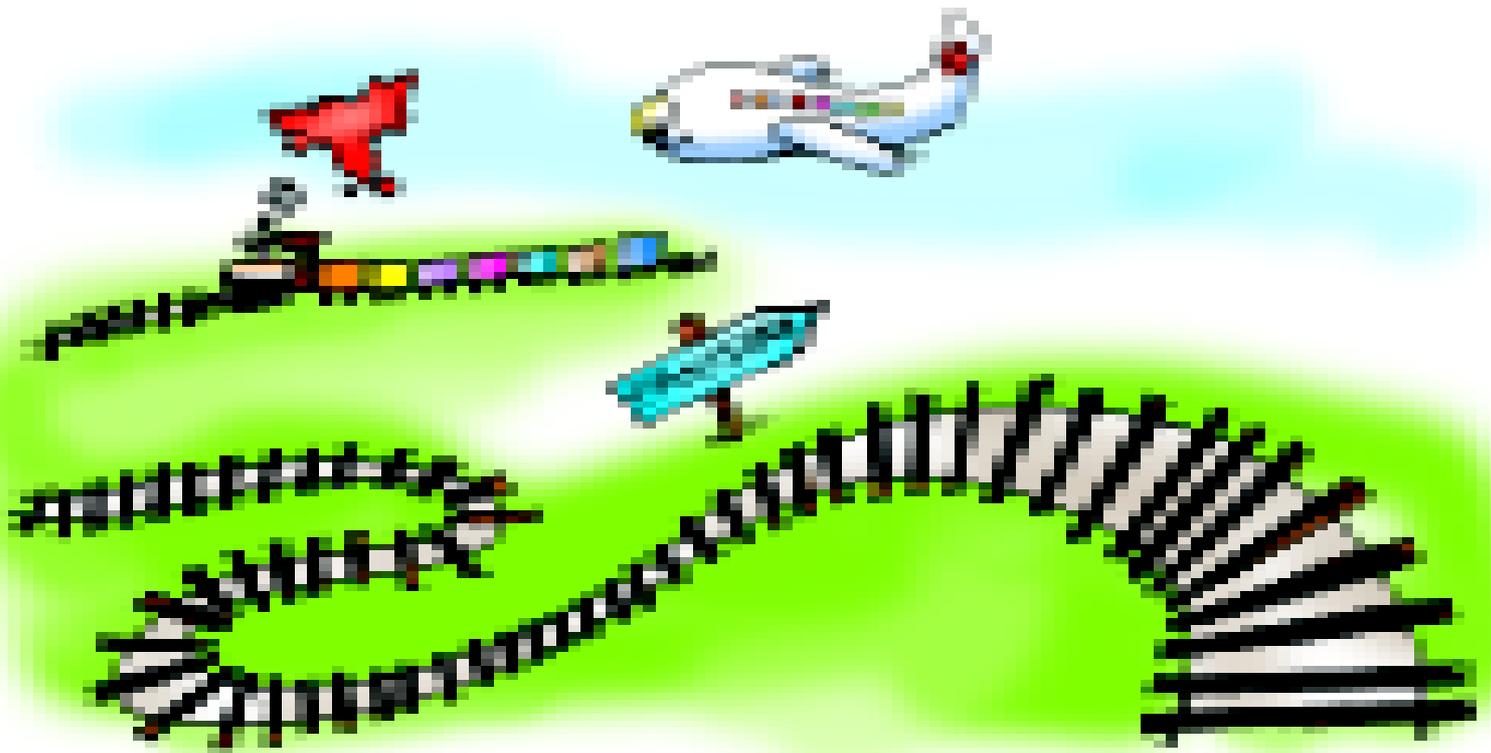
REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR THE UN STUDY ON

**VIOLENCE  
AGAINST CHILDREN  
IN SOUTH ASIA**





# Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia



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# Foreword

Many girls and boys face violence in places where they live, study or work. It could be their homes, schools, special homes for children, communities and/or workplaces. They may suffer from physical, psychological or sexual abuse by the people who are supposed to take care of them. Girls and boys have a right to live a life free of violence. They are telling the adults and other girls and boys to put an end to violence against children.

The Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children in South Asia gave an opportunity for children and young people to share their views and experiences of various types of violence they face in their countries and their recommendations on how people in the government and other influential people can protect children from violence. This is a child and youth friendly report that gives information about the discussions in key areas relating to violence, actions and initiatives taken by children and the government and the recommendations the adults, children and young people have come up with at the Regional Consultation.

Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office for South and Central Asia, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and Plan Nepal worked together to produce this report. We hope this report will help girls and boys all over the world, including South Asia, to know about their rights and the promises the governments have made to help children lead lives free of violence. It is our hope that this document will be part of a process that makes South Asia and the rest of the world a better place for all its children.

# List of Abbreviations

ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGOs	International Non Government Organisations
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
NGOs	Non Government Organisations
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
TDH	Terre des Hommes
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCRC	United Nations Conventions on Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

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## What is this book about?

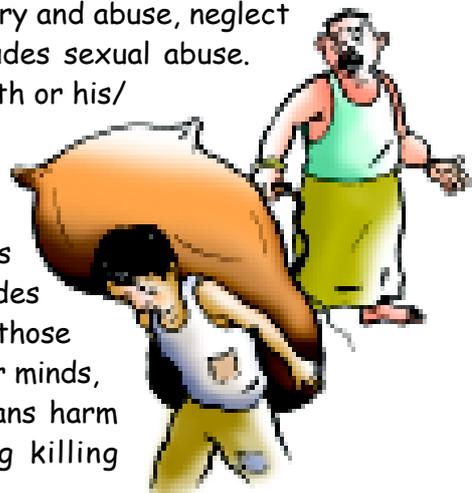
This is a child and youth friendly book that briefly tells girls and boys about the discussions, concerns and recommendations that came up during the **'Consultation of South Asia Children and Young People for the UN Study on Violence against Children'** followed by a **'Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia'**. South Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The consultations were held as part of a larger process of preparing a report for the United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children. It has given adults and children an opportunity to work together to understand the issue and to find ways of stopping violence against children.



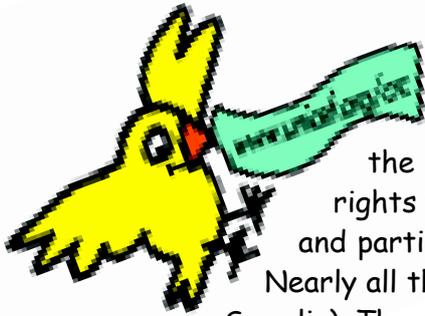
## What is Violence?

Violence means all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or bad treatment, maltreatment and exploitation. It includes sexual abuse. Violence is what happens when someone uses his/her strength or his/her position of power to hurt someone else on purpose, not by accident.

Violence happens to children in different ways and situations in different countries, cultures and religions. Violence includes threats and acts, which could possibly cause harm, as well as those that actually do. The harm can be to children's feelings, their minds, bodies, or their general health and well-being. It also means harm children and young people do to themselves, including killing themselves.



# What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?



World leaders believe that children are special and have a special place in this world. So they met at the United Nations and prepared a document called the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This document says that you have rights to remain alive, stay healthy, be educated, live free from violence, and participate and express your opinions in matters that affect your life. Nearly all the countries in the world have signed the UNCRC (except USA and Somalia). The countries in South Asia have all signed this document.

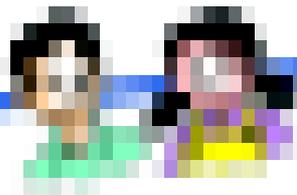
You have these rights, whoever you are, whoever your parents are, wherever you come from, whether you are a girl or a boy, whatever religion you belong to, whatever language you speak, whichever communities you belong to, whatever the colour of your skin is, whether you have a disability, or if you are rich or poor.

You have rights, but you also have responsibilities. For example, you should have the right to say what you like, but that doesn't mean you can shout at others and not listen to other people's ideas or say things to hurt people's feelings. It also means that you have the responsibility to respect the rights of others.

You can find more about the Convention on [www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/).



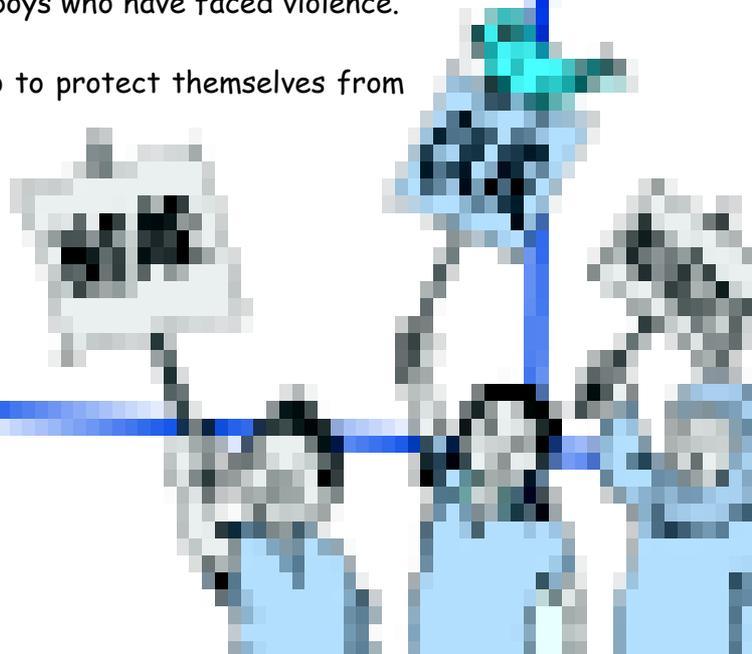
According to the UNCRC, children mean all children under 18 years old. Article 19 (a section in UNCRC) of the UNCRC says that you have the right to be protected from physical and mental violence, degrading punishment, injury, neglect and abuse whether you are living with your parents or with other people who have taken the responsibility to take care of you. Sections in the UNCRC also say that your government should do everything it can to ensure this protection including making sure there are proper laws to protect you and that you must be able to get help when you are physically, emotionally or sexually abused.



## What is the UN Study on Violence against Children?

The UN Study on Violence against Children is an international project looking at violence committed against girls and boys across the world. If you want to know more about the Study you can find information at the following website: [www.violencestudy.org](http://www.violencestudy.org)

- The UN Study on Violence looks at the forms of violence faced by girls and boys all over the world.
- The study pays special attention to violence in homes, schools, institutions (shelters, orphanages, courts, detention centres, prisons etc.), communities (including streets) and places where children work.
- It looks at the causes of violence against girls and boys.
- It looks at the effects of violence against girls and boys.
- It also gives ideas on how governments and non-governmental organisations, parents and other people responsible for children can prevent all forms of violence against girls and boys.
- It looks at how best to help girls and boys who have faced violence.
- It looks at what girls and boys can do to protect themselves from violence.



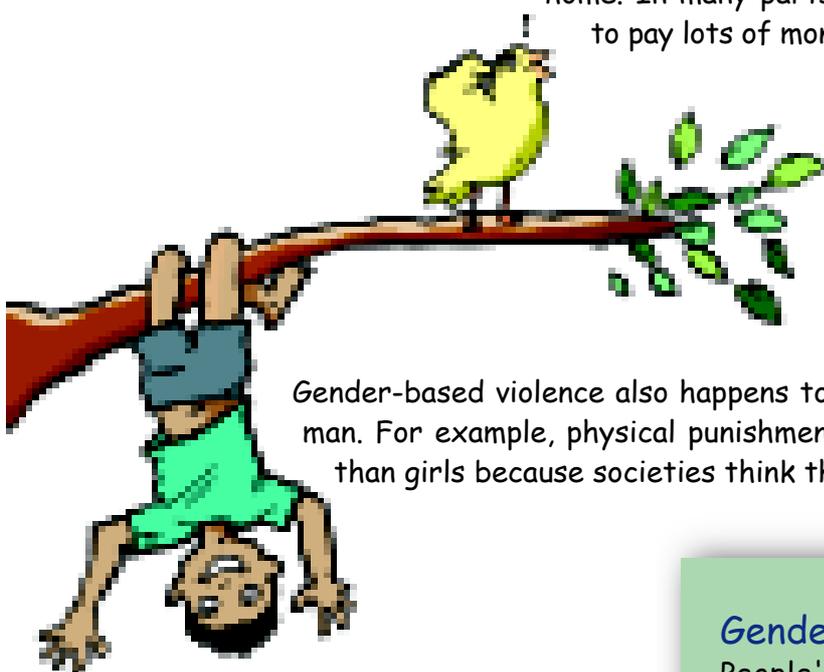
# The Most Common Types of Violence Selected at the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia

## Gender-based Violence

Sometimes violence happens to a person particularly because she/he is a girl or a boy. It is based on how people think girls should behave and how boys should behave in societies. Some people are taught to think that girls are weak and need to be looked after. They think that boys should be strong.

In some places many people think that girls have inferior roles in societies. They think that it is not worth sending them to school as they will soon get married and move to their husband's home. In many parts of South Asia, girls' family have

to pay lots of money or gifts to the husband's family (known as dowry) and this system is a serious problem for poor parents who have daughters. The killing of unborn and newborn babies, early marriage and psychological abuse happen more to girls than boys in this region.



Gender-based violence also happens to someone because he is a boy or a man. For example, physical punishment is used more often against boys than girls because societies think that boys are tough.

### Sex

Whether someone is physically a girl or a boy, depending on the characteristics of her/his body, like her/his sex organ.

### Gender

People's perception of how girls and boys should behave in societies. How should one act on "being a boy" or "being a girl". Every culture expects different behaviours from men, women, boys and girls. For example, generally in South Asia girls are expected to be quiet and obedient while boys are expected to be strong and tough.

# Child Sexual Abuse

This is the most hidden form of violence because people feel ashamed when this happens to them or to someone close to them. Sexual abuse of children means any kind of sexual activity done to children, especially by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust.

Some examples of sexual abuse are,



Touching a child in private places of his or her body (like the genitals, anus or breast).



Making a child touch private parts of his or her own body, or the abuser's body.



Making a child watch sexual activity or pornography.



Sexually harassing a child by name calling, saying mean things, joking, asking personal questions, making noises, making signs and gestures, staring, following, touching, grabbing, spreading rumours and so on.

Most children who are abused do not talk about their abuse because they are ashamed of it. They feel guilty because they think that it is their fault. They also do not talk about it to protect their family honour and to protect the abusers who are often the people they trust.

## Physical and Psychological Punishment

This is any kind of abuse that adults might use to punish children, to 'teach them a lesson' or to discipline them. Physical and psychological punishment happens in every culture, religion, class and caste, and in poor and rich families. It is usually done by people who are supposed to take care of children. Many people think that in order to discipline, educate and control children it is alright to physically or mentally punish them. Physical punishment can include beating, burning, slapping, whipping, kicking, hitting with a stick or belt or any other object, locking in chains, banging against a wall, standing on one leg in the sun, spanking and starving.

Psychological punishment includes name-calling, belittling, threats, taunting or mocking, humiliating, ignoring, comparing unfavourably with a brother or a sister or other children, keeping children in isolation, keeping the child in a locked room, forcing children to perform low or degrading activities (e.g. eating cow dung), or simply neglecting the child's educational, physical and emotional needs.



# Violence in Five Settings

The Regional Consultation went on to look more deeply at how gender-based violence, sexual abuse and physical and psychological punishment takes place in the five places where children live and spend their time: homes/families, schools, institutions, communities and workplaces.

## 1 Violence against Children in Homes and Families

Although the family/home is the first and the most important environment where children are cared for and protected, violence against girls and boys happens most often in homes and family settings. Many children leave their homes because of the physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse they face there. However, violence within the home/family is hidden, not talked about or sometimes denied in South Asian society.



## 2 Violence against Children in Schools

Punishment in schools is the most common form of violence in South Asia. Girls and boys are often kicked, slapped or caned in schools. Many children feel that psychological punishment is even worse than physical punishment. Many South Asian girls and boys drop out of school because of physical and psychological punishment, and in some cases because of sexual abuse.



# 3

## Violence against Children in Institutions

Violence is common in orphanages, residential homes (places where groups of children live if they do not have parents or if their families cannot look after them), police stations, and prisons. Some staff of these institutions even practice whipping, caning and verbal abuse. Police and caretakers of these institutions often physically, mentally and/or sexually abuse and torture children who are in conflict with the law.



# 4

## Violence against Children in Communities



Community violence often occurs in South Asia. Members of powerful communities sometimes beat up, kill and/or physically, sexually and psychologically hurt adults and children from less powerful communities. Violence also occurs against disabled children, people with HIV/AIDS or people who are homosexuals. Children and adults from lower castes, ethnic communities and minority religions or religious sects are discriminated against. Gang violence by and against adolescents is also growing.

# 5

## Violence against Children in Workplaces



Child workers often work long hours in conditions harmful to their health. They have to work to support their families and this affects their health, education and development. Many child workers are physically, psychologically or/and sexually abused by their employers or by people who work with them.

## Why does Violence happen to Children and Young People?

- Many people in this world think that it is okay for some people who have power to dominate people who have less power. People who have greater physical strength or money or high positions or are older feel that they have more power and that they can make the less powerful person do something he or she does not want to. For example, an adult uses power over a child, an employer uses power over a worker, or a man uses power over a woman.
- Children with big families or wealthy families may be abused, just as children with no families or poor families may be abused. However, where families live in extremely poor situations or poverty, are more likely to have low education, and harder time to meet their basic needs. Living in circumstances like these causes stress. When parents or other caregivers are under stress they sometimes lash out on their children.
- Some cultural beliefs and practices hurt girls and boys. The practice of early marriage of girls is very common and this shortens the period of childhood for girls, gives them adult responsibility at an early age and some of them catches sexual diseases or sometimes dies when they give child birth.

A cultural practice in South Asia that is harmful for boys is pressuring sons to take care of their parents and families. There is also pressure for boys to be strong and masculine and sometimes be part of a gang or to become soldiers. They may try to relieve these feelings by abusing other people who have less power, like younger children, girls and people from social groups they think of as lower. They may also abuse themselves through substance abuse, meaning that they try to use alcohol or drugs to escape their bad feelings.

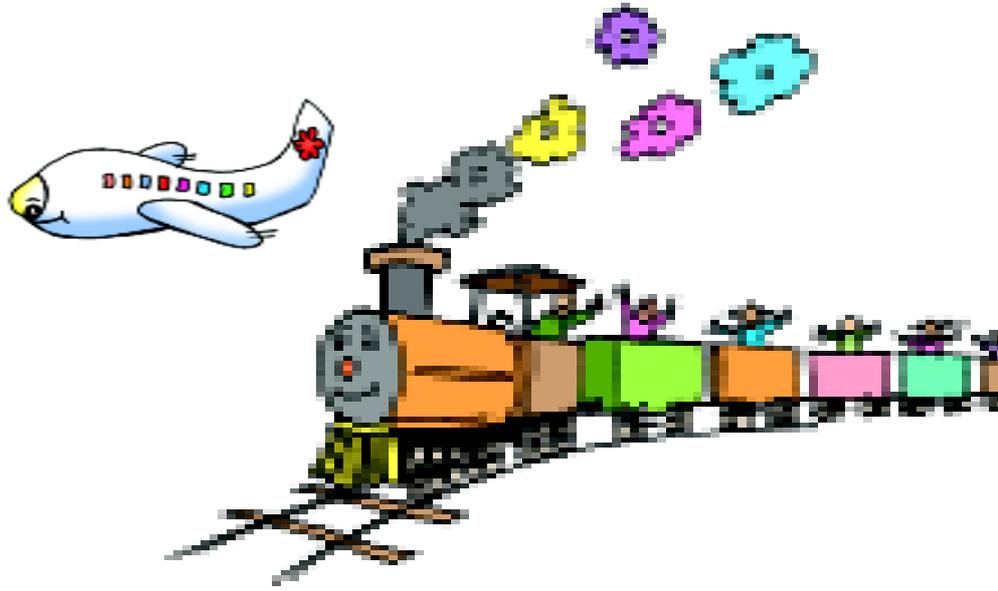
- People usually think of home and the family as a private place and that no outsiders can ever come into. In practice this usually means that people do not talk about abuses that happen within their families, and 'outsiders' like neighbours or police generally do not go into people's houses to investigate or stop abuse.
- There are no special laws for children that can protect children from all kinds of violence. So many people think they can get away with it.
- Girls and boys do not speak out against violence. It is worse when they are sexually abused because parents and other adults want them to hide about sexual abuse. They often do not know where to go and whom to share their problems with. This causes abuse to continue in children's lives.



## How Violence Effects Children and Young People?

Violence has both short and long-term negative effects on children.

- Children may suffer injuries arising from violence that needs medical attention, leave permanent damage, disabilities and even cause their death.
- Violence causes low self esteem, sadness, shame, sense of hopelessness and depression.
- Children may have difficulties in learning, may lose interest in learning, in paying attention, and may have negative effects on their memories.
- It may cause poor relationships with parents, peer, siblings, friends and those in authority. It is often linked to an increased likelihood of delinquent and antisocial behaviour.
- Girls and boys start believing that violence is okay, that it is all right for a stronger person to use force to hurt a weaker one. This creates a cycle of violence in the family and in society. Children observe and imitate the behaviour of the adult so if the adult shows anger and aggressiveness the child will adopt that behaviour.



# Consultations with Children and Young People for the UN Study on Violence Against Children

The UN Study on Violence against Children recognises that to learn about violence against children it is best to ask children themselves through holding meaningful discussions with girls and boys on violence issues. That is why the UN hosted a number of consultations with children and young people in different regions of the world. The UN wanted to know what young people had to say about how and why violence happens to children in their day-to-day lives, how they feel about violence and how they can help adults to stop it from happening.

National consultations took place within countries. In these consultations, girls and boys talked about violence against them with people from the government and from other organisations that work with children.

In the regional consultations, children and adults from several countries in the region met together in one city to talk about violence against children and what can be done to stop it. The adults included people from governments of different countries in the region, people from the United Nations organisations and people from non-governmental organisations working with children in different countries of the region.

The regional consultations took place in: The Caribbean, West and Central Africa, the Americas, North America, East Asia and the Pacific, Middle East and North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, East and Southern Africa and South Asia.

In each region, children got a chance to meet on their own before the regional consultation so they could discuss their own experiences of violence against children and their own ideas about what can be done to stop it. They then were able to talk about these with the adults in the regional consultation.

## South Asia Children and Young People's Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children



13 girls and 12 boys between 10 and 18 years of age took part in the 'South Asia Children and Young People's Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children' on 17-18 May 2005, in Islamabad, Pakistan. They came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This consultation was held before the 'Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia'. Chaperones or translators accompanied the girls and boys. Save the Children, Plan International and UNICEF facilitated the Children and Young People's Consultation.

### The purpose of this consultation with girls and boys was to:

Provide space for girls and boys to discuss their views, concerns and recommendations on various forms of violence against children in their countries

Share experiences of children's own actions to end violence against children

Prepare them for the Regional Consultation for the UN Study in South Asia

Contribute children's views and recommendations to the Global UN Study on Violence against Children.

The girls and boys saw a film titled, 'Children's Voices against Violence against Girls and Boys'. The film was made by children's representatives from different countries of South Asia, facilitated by Save the Children. The film presented children's perceptions and concerns about violence in different contexts and their actions to stop this violence.

## Discussions

The children then split up into country groups to discuss the type of violence they experience in their own countries. Their discussions focused on three types of violence: physical and psychological punishment, sexual abuse and gender-based violence. They shared their experiences, concerns, actions and recommendations to address these issues. They produced their own statement, which was presented at the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children. (See Annex 1)

### Physical and Psychological Punishment

Adults think that physical and psychological punishment is good for children's upbringing and do not see it as abuse. Parents may not know that they can bring up and discipline children without violence. They seldom listen to girls and boys when they talk about abuse.



### Gender-based Violence

Children and young people also talked about various forms of gender-based violence. Many parents think they have a duty to get their daughters married at a young age. Young brides are sometimes tortured or harassed by their husband's family for not understanding family matters. Some girl babies are killed even before they are born just because they are girls.



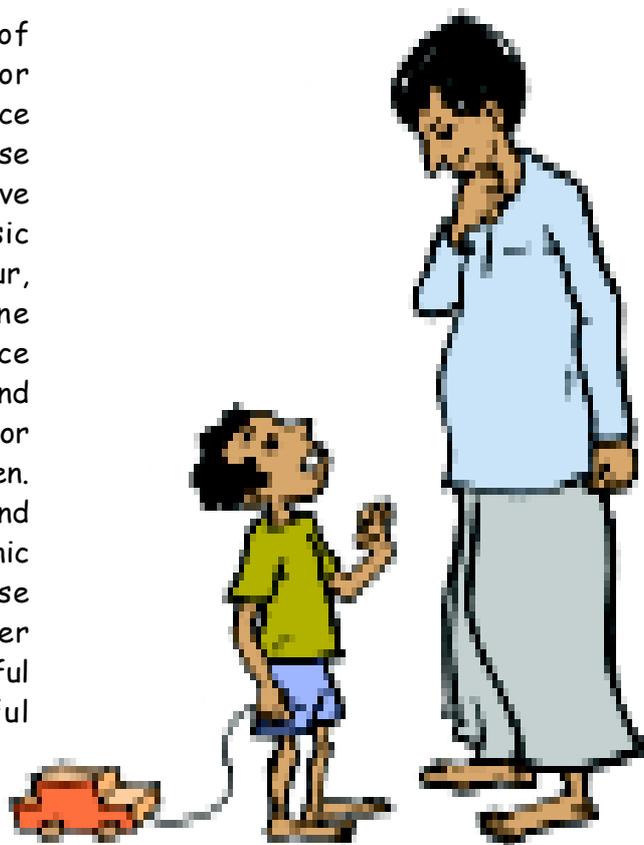
### Child Sexual Abuse

Children and young people are afraid or ashamed to talk about sexual abuse because they might be discriminated against if people learn about what happened to them. The family also forbids children from talking about sexual abuse or sexual violence since it brings shame and dishonour to the family. Sexual abuse sometimes leads to honour killing.



## Children's Perceptions on the Causes of Violence

The children also discussed the causes of violence. Sometimes cultural, traditional or religious practices cause adults to use violence against children. At times, poverty can cause neglect and violence, when parents do not have enough money to fulfil their children's basic needs. Since children imitate adult behaviour, patterns of violence are copied from one generation to another and cycles of violence continue. Adults such as teachers, parents and others may not know about children's rights or the negative effects of violence against children. Discrimination against girls, disabled children and children (both girls and boys) from poor, ethnic or minority groups is another reason these children experience violence. Unequal power relations in society make it possible for powerful people to exploit and abuse less powerful children and people.



## Actions

The children then talked about their own actions to end violence against children in their own countries.

- National Task Forces of Children were formed in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to investigate and monitor violence against children and report to governments and NGOs.
- Many girls and boys in South Asia are involved in advocacy and awareness-raising by making documentary films, working in the visual arts, creating posters, monthly bulletins, newspapers, radio shows, street plays, and by holding children's forums.
- For example, girls in Nepal have developed centres to help other girls who are facing threats of early marriage or abuse.
- Some children have been able to stop violence in their families and/or schools through negotiation, dialogue and discussion with family members, influential people in the community, teachers and members of parliament.

## Recommendations by Children and Young People



- Adults should listen to children's suggestions on how to address violence against children.
- Government must make laws concerning children that meet the requirements of the UNCRC, and they must make sure these laws are put into practice.
- Governments should use existing government bodies and NGOs to stop violence against children
- Special Groups should be created all over the country to end violence against children.
- Regular consultations should be held with parents, children's committees and community leaders.
- Parents, teachers, NGOs and children should all be involved in programmes to address violence against children. Communities should pressurise the government to stop violence against girls and boys.
- Parents' awareness of the UNCRC needs to be raised.
- Parents' associations should be established in communities so they can raise their voices against violence against girls and boys.
- Parents need to be encouraged to be more connected with their children - to listen to them and see things from children's point of view
- Media should be prevented from using names, pictures and addresses of children who have been abused.
- More child-friendly information and materials on violence against children and how to prevent it must be produced.
- Children who belong to children's clubs, task forces, child parliaments and child media groups should be trained on ways to prevent and protect children from violence so they can train more children to end violence against girls and boys.
- Children need to be informed about the responsibilities that come along with rights so that they do not abuse other children.

## Recommendations of Children and Young People to deal with Specific Forms of Violence

### End Physical and Psychological Punishment

- Create national laws against physical and psychological punishment and make sure they are properly put into practice and monitored. Make sure that everybody knows about these laws.
- Provide training for teachers on positive discipline. Make sure teachers behave lovingly and affectionately towards all children.
- Educate parents on children's rights and non-violent methods of disciplining girls and boys.
- Set up mechanisms in schools and communities where children can complain about physical and psychological punishment.

### End Gender-based Violence

- Parents should treat girls and boys equally.
- Make special laws to prevent violence specifically targeted at girls. Make sure these laws are strictly implemented throughout the country.
- Raise awareness about violence against girls frequently and regularly through media, including radio, television, posters, and notices throughout the country.
- Include information about gender equality, discrimination and gender-based violence in the school curriculum.

### End Child Sexual Abuse

- Implement the laws of the UNCRC relating to sexual abuse of children.
- Make counselling and other support accessible for all children in the community.
- Form Child Task Forces, which will work on preventing child sexual abuse.
- Include education on prevention of child sexual abuse in the school curriculum. Provide safety education for children from an early age.

## Concluding Remarks by Children

“ We urge you to activate these recommendations and others made by children in previous consultations and to involve us when designing actions on Violence against Girls and Boys in each country and in the region. ”

## Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children in South Asia

Girls, boys and adults from governments, NGOs, school other academic institutions from all the countries in South Asia met on 19-20 May, 2005, in Islamabad, Pakistan to take part in the Regional Consultation for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. The South Asia Coordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women organised the consultation. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan hosted the consultation.



### What is the South Asia Coordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children?

The South Asia Coordinating Group against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Women is an interagency body consisting of UN agencies (ILO, UNAIDS, UNDP Special Initiative on HIV/AIDS, UNESCAP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, OHCHR and WHO), international organisations (ECPAT, IOM, Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes), and with USAID and the SAARC Secretariat as observers. Established on 31 March 2004, it carried out several successful regional events in 2004 and 2005. After the Regional Consultation on Violence against Children, the group was renamed the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence.

## People who took part in the South Asia Regional Consultation

The 25 children and young people from all South Asian countries except India who took part in the Regional Consultation on 17 and 18 May 2005 continued to be part of this process.

150 adults from all South Asian countries participated in the consultation including:

- Representatives from governments of all the countries in the region
- Representatives from national and regional UN agencies which work with and for children
- Representatives from national and international NGOs which work with and for children
- Representatives from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Secretariat
- Representatives from the media
- People who have knowledge and expertise on child rights and violence issues.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a regional organisation consisting of the seven South Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan will soon become a member of SAARC. The Heads of States (Prime Ministers and/or Presidents and/or Kings) meet every year to discuss ways of working together to improve economic, political, social conditions and the conditions of children in the region.

## The aim of the South Asia Regional Consultation

- Review three kinds of violence (gender-based violence, child sexual abuse, and physical and psychological punishment in the five settings of homes, schools, institutions, communities, and workplaces).
- Make governments and other organisations in the region pay more attention to violence against children.
- Identify laws and child protection systems to protect children from violence; identify laws that need to be improved; and/or new laws that need to be made to prevent violence and protect children.
- Share good work, ideas and experiences on what young people, government and/or other organisations have done to prevent violence against girls and boys and the kind of support and services they offer to children.
- Develop ideas and plans not only for preventing violence but also for protecting and rebuilding the lives of children who face violence.
- Provide information and recommendations that come up during the consultation to the global UN Study on Violence against Children

## Summary of Speeches and Discussions at the South Asia Regional Consultation

The First Lady of Pakistan (the Pakistan President's wife) Begum Sehba Musharraf chaired the opening session of the conference. She encouraged everyone to take initiatives to discuss this issue and make efforts to stop violence against children.

Zubeida Jalal, Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education, Representative of the Government of Pakistan, welcomed the participants. She gave an overview of the situation of violence against children. She felt that people in general, the media, national and international organisations should come forward to join hands with the government to devote more time and money for children's welfare and development.

Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, an independent expert who is leading the UN Study on Violence against Children, talked about the various types of violence that children experience in different ways in different regions, and among different races, religions, cultures, income and social backgrounds. He also talked about the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Cecilia Lotse, UNICEF's Regional Director in South Asia, said that the consultation was extremely important and it comes at a time of more knowledge about abuses that are not seen or talked about in public. She then briefly described the aims of the Regional Consultation and hoped that the meeting would help everyone present develop plans and actions to end violence in South Asia.

Naseer Mohammad, Director Social Affairs, SAARC, said that the heads of the governments of all South Asian countries had signed two agreements that promise to support each other (1) in preventing and fighting against trafficking of women and children and (2) in improving the welfare of children.

Peter Newell, an expert on violence against children, reminded governments, UN and other organisations in South Asia that they have signed the CRC, which means that they have obligations and the duty to fulfil the promises they have made to children and all citizens. He gave a summary of the 'Regional Study on Violence against Children in South Asia'.

## Presentation by Children and Young People



The morning session of the meeting's first day ended with girls and boys presenting their concerns about violence. They spoke directly to governments, UN agencies and other organisations. Some of them performed dramas or skits, drew pictures or sang songs to share their experiences, concerns and achievements in taking action against violence. They also presented the statement they had prepared during the 'Children and Young People's Consultation' to everyone in the audience.

These presentations were followed by country presentations.

## Country Presentations

The section below talks about some particular forms of violence common in each country and some important steps the governments have taken to decrease violence in their countries.

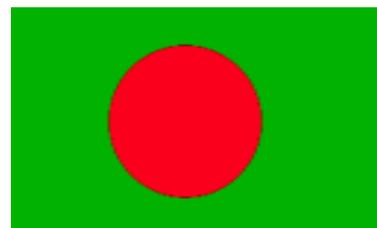
### Afghanistan

Afghanistan has experienced 20 years of war, which has deeply affected children's lives. The government has formed the National Child Welfare Network so that all organisations and people working with children will create united plans and actions to promote children's rights. One successful initiative the Afghanistan team identified was having religious leaders take the initiative to act and to appeal for an end to violence against children. Afghanistan's challenge now is to improve the lives of children in remote areas and to improve the country's security, as frequent attacks are mounted against the government by different groups.



## Bangladesh

A National Consultation was held throughout the country with girls, boys and representatives from the government, NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and other organisations. This provided the organisations an opportunity to learn about the situation of violence against girls and boys in the country. The government has passed special laws to prevent acid violence (people throwing acid, usually on girls and women to disfigure their faces), trafficking, early marriage and dowry. The challenge for the government is to make certain that everybody knows about these laws and follows them, and to offer the right kinds of services for children affected by violence.



## Bhutan

Bhutan also held a National Consultation with children, government, national and international NGOs and UN agencies. The National Commission for Women and Children was set up to work with issues concerning women and children. Bhutan has changed its marriage law (the *'Marital Act of 1980, amended in 1996'*) making it illegal for girls under 18 years of age to marry. The main areas of concern are violence against child workers and disabled children. Commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking are yet to be recognised.



## India

In 2003, *India's National Children's Charter 2003* was designed to make sure that all children are able to enjoy a healthy and happy childhood. The Charter plans to help families and communities protect children from all forms of abuse. Another notable action is that the Indian government made it illegal for doctors, parents and others to kill unborn babies just because they are girls. This law is called the *Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Regulation and Prevention of Misuse Act*. The challenge is to change people's attitudes towards children and to allocate more money in the national budget to provide services for children.



## Maldives

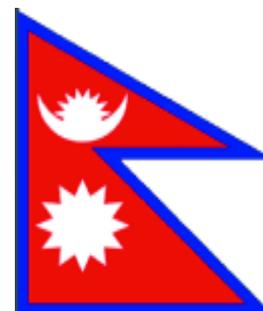
Maldives has introduced the following laws: (1) mandatory reporting of violence against children, (2) a ban on corporal punishment in all schools and (3) 'family conferencing' where crimes committed by a child would be settled among families in front of an arbitrator. Sending the child to a court would be the last option. The government has set up the *National Council for the Protection of Child* (called the NCPC), which is



meant to work with the government to provide greater protection for children. However, the authorities in Maldives still fail to take appropriate action when they receive reports of violence against girls and boys.

## Nepal

Nine years of fighting between the army and the Maoists (a group of Nepalese people who are fighting against the government) has caused destruction to health and education services, loss of life and income for many families, and the break up of families and communities. Many children have been forced to become child workers, or have been trafficked for sexual purposes or have been exploited in other ways. A very important decision was made by Nepal's Supreme Court when it overturned a law that allowed parents, family members and guardians and teachers to beat their children for their welfare.



## Pakistan

The Pakistan government has formed a National Child Protection Centre to help the government provide services for children and to make new laws to protect children from violence. The government also formed the National Commission of Child Welfare and Development. However, some laws still cause harm to many children, especially girls. For example, under the Hudood Ordinance of 1979 a girl is defined as an adult woman when she starts her menstruation. Also, a girl can prove that she has been raped only when there are two male witnesses. Many NGOs, lawyers, some people in the government, and several organisations are trying to change these laws.



## Sri Lanka

The fighting in Sri Lanka's between the Tamil Tigers and the army, as well as last year's tsunami have caused many children to leave their homes to become child soldiers, labourers, prostitutes or other exploited workers. The National Child Protection Authority, established in 1998, works with all the sections of the government to protect children from violence. District Child Protection Committees have been formed to protect children from violence and to monitor violence at the district level. Sex tourism, where tourists pay money to have sex with children, is a new problem in the country.



## Recommendations

On the meeting's second day, participants were divided into three groups: gender-based violence, child sexual abuse and physical and psychological punishment. In each group, a person who is an expert on the issue gave an overview of the subject. Then the group split up into five sub-groups (break-away groups) and each sub-group focused its discussion on one of the five different settings: families, schools, communities, institutions and workplaces. The group on child sexual abuse was divided into groups that focused on general recommendations such as advocacy, capacity building, legislation, services and monitoring. The discussions and recommendations were presented to the participants.

The recommendations of all three thematic groups and five sub-groups of each of the thematic group are summarised below. This is followed by recommendations that were common to all the sub-groups.

## Gender-based Violence



### Homes/families

- Conduct research to understand the real causes of gender-based violence within the home/family.
- Do not keep silent when you see violence in homes.
- Teach parents and other family members to develop a positive attitude towards girls.
- Support campaigns and movements to stop discrimination against girls.
- Create free telephone numbers (child-lines) so that people can easily report violence against children.
- Change laws that are harmful to girls and women.
- Improve laws that will allow girls and boys to have equal shares of their parents' properties and protect girls from getting married before they are 18 years old.

- Stop the practice of dowry -where the bride's family is encouraged or forced to give a certain amount of money or other gifts to the bridegroom and his family.
- Make the government and the family responsible to prevent gender-based violence from happening.
- Encourage television, radio, newspapers and magazines to report gender-based violence without harming the reputation and the dignity of children and their families.

## School

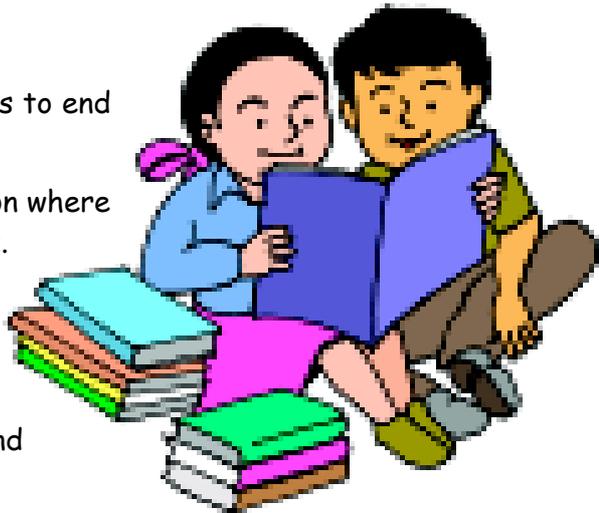
- Educate teachers, students and parents on gender-based violence.
- Include gender issues in the school curriculum, the teacher-training curriculum and in training manuals.
- Encourage students, teachers and parents to treat girls and boys equally.
- Have appropriate counselling services and guidance system in school to advise children, teachers and parents on topics related to gender and gender-based violence.
- Support peer clubs, children clubs to identify, report and prevent incidents of violence in their schools.
- Collect information on incidents of gender-based violence in schools.
- Introduce laws and policies that will protect girls and boys from violence in schools.
- Offer appropriate and child-friendly services and options to girls and boys to help them recover from abuse they have suffered and return to normal life.

## Institutions

- Make laws, policies and programmes functional by 2010.
- Provide more money to institutions.
- Copy the systems and practices of institutions that follow good practices.
- Educate and train institution staff on gender issues and gender-based violence.
- Have a strong monitoring system to stop gender-based violence from happening in institutions.
- Make sure all institutions follow strict guidelines.
- Educate people in all government departments and staff working in institutions on gender issues and gender-based violence.
- Establish child-friendly courts so that both girls and boys feel comfortable talking about their abuse in front of judges, lawyers and people they can trust.

## Communities

- Involve parents and communities in programmes to end gender-based violence in the community.
- Set up a community level centre or an institution where people can report violence and receive services.
- Set up children's desks at police stations so that girls and boys can easily report violence against them or other children.
- Form village committees, which will monitor and prevent gender-based violence in communities.
- Work with religious leaders to stop gender discrimination and gender-based violence.



## Workplaces

- Educate employers on non-violent methods of supervising children.
- Provide opportunities for working girls and boys to receive education and vocational training.
- Collect information on child workers, their conditions and threats to their well being.
- Put up posters on children's rights with a focus on children's right to be protected from various types of violence in workplaces.
- Make the government protect children from violence in the workplace.
- Introduce effective laws to prevent children from being exploited in the workplace.

# Child Sexual Abuse

The thematic groups focusing on recommendations to stop child sexual abuse were divided into subgroups according to the following categories:

## Improving Laws

- Make laws against child sexual abuse for boys and girls (with a focus on the family) and see how these laws can be improved and put into practice.
- Make everybody know about the laws by using simple and child-friendly local languages.
- Provide basic knowledge on legal issues and processes to children, police, lawyers, judges, social workers and others in the judicial system so they know how to deal with child sexual abuse.
- Provide protection to children when they report violence to the police and/or in courts.
- Hold government, police and the judges accountable for failing to implement the existing laws.

## Provide Support and Services

- Improve health services, including mental health services and temporary homes to help children and their families to recover from the trauma of child sexual abuse.
- Set up an appropriate and child-friendly health care system and special wards in hospitals for adolescents.
- Support schools, child clubs and any other kind of children's group to stop sexual abuse of children.
- Support elder sisters and brothers, friends and other children to prevent and take actions against child sexual abuse in the family.

## Increase Knowledge and Capacity

- Teach mothers and fathers about good parenting methods and child protection.
- Offer training to parents, teachers, government officials, religious/community/political leaders and others who are in charge of care and safety of children on child sexual abuse.
- Provide training to journalists on child sexual abuse, child rights and respect for children's privacy and dignity.
- Include child sexual abuse, child protection and child rights in the teacher-training curriculum.
- Make available a life skills training programme that talks about sexuality, one's body, reproductive and sexual health, gender issues and masculinity.

## Create Awareness

- Encourage UN, INGOs, NGOs and other organisations to produce books, posters, materials and games that people can use to teach and learn about child rights and child sexual abuse.
- Involve people from NGOs, religious, community and political leaders to stop child sexual abuse.
- Support children's participation and children's groups to make people aware about child sexual abuse.
- Produce child-friendly books, posters and other materials in local languages that make children and young people aware about sexual abuse and also teach them how to protect themselves from sexual abuse.
- Work with men and boys to end gender discrimination and child sexual abuse.



## Monitor and Report

- Develop a system of regularly collecting data on sexual abuse of girls and boys in families, schools, institutions, communities and workplaces.
- Involve communities and children in identifying and reporting sexual abuse of children.
- Develop child protection policies in schools.
- Appoint an independent expert who will monitor and report on violence against children in the region.

# Physical and Psychological Punishment

## Homes/Families

- Make laws that prohibit physical and psychological punishment in the family.
- Abolish any laws that can be used to justify physical and psychological punishment.
- Make sure that all the laws related to violence against children are in line with the UNCRC.
- Provide information and training to parents, teachers, religious leaders and other professionals on non-violent methods of raising children and on methods of positive discipline.
- Carry out research on the number of children being physically and psychologically punished in homes and families.

## Schools

- Pass laws banning corporal punishment in schools.
- Make government increase funds for education.
- Include positive discipline methods in the teacher-training curriculum.
- Support child participation in parliaments when passing laws related to children's welfare.
- Create child-friendly environments in schools - this means creating environments where teaching and learning not only helps children to learn but is also fun for them.
- Encourage child participation when school rules are being set.
- Hold youth forums in schools so that children have opportunities to discuss issues that affect them.

## Institutions

- Train staff of institutions on non-violent methods of care and discipline.
- Educate everyone involved directly or indirectly with the legal system and the institution about child-friendly detention centres, homes, etc.
- Help those in charge of children's care and safety develop a positive attitude towards children in institutions and not treat them as criminals.
- Monitor the institutions regularly.
- Punish staff members who use physical and psychological punishment.

## Communities

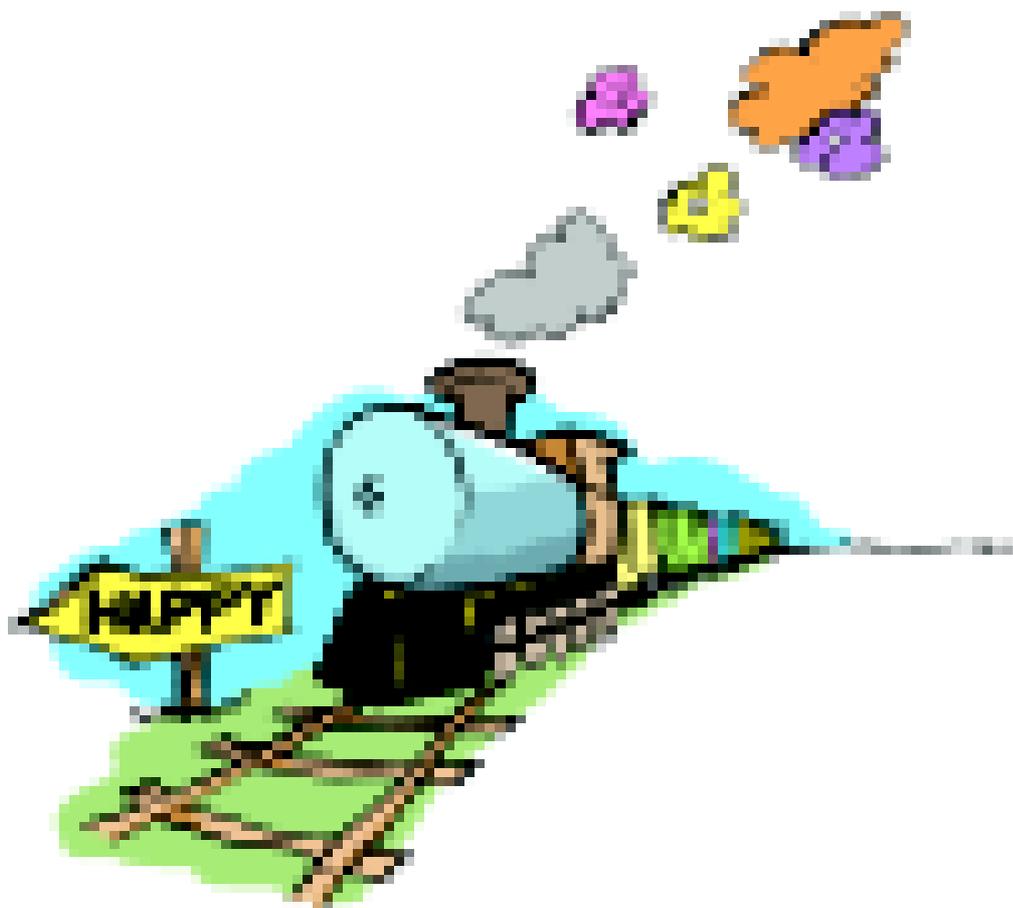
- Educate parents, teachers, police, community leaders and other influential people in the community to understand and practice non-violent methods of discipline.
- Teach people about non-discrimination.
- Strengthen birth and marriage registration throughout the region.
- Carry out research to understand the effects of media, alcoholism, migration, natural disasters and situations of stress on violence against children.

## Workplaces

- Children should not be in workplaces. The ultimate goal is to end child labour.
- Increase the minimum age for children to work.
- Define work that is harmful to children in line with international standards.
- Have alternative places where children can stay while their parents work.



## Closing Session



Ms Zobaida Jalal, the Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education of the Government of Pakistan, said it is important to set up a 'South Asia Forum' that will enable all countries in the region to work together to end violence against children. Professor Paulo Pinheiro said that governments have an important role to play in overcoming the difficulties to end violence against children and to bring about positive change. He said that this meeting is only the beginning of a journey. Cecilia Lotse thanked the Government of Pakistan for its hospitality and warmth, the children for their active participation, and the facilitators and all other participants and organisers.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Shawkat Aziz, promised to set up a Child Protection Centre as a model for others to follow. With this promise, he concluded the Regional Consultation.

## Follow-up to Regional Consultation

After the South Asia Regional Consultation the governments decided to form a South Asia Forum so that they could meet regularly and work to end violence against children in the region. A Secretariat of South Asia Forum will be formed in Islamabad to follow up on recommendations from the Consultation.

# ANNEX 1

**Statement by Children and Young People at the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence against Children, 17-18 May 2005, Islamabad, Pakistan.**

## **WHO WE ARE....**

We are children from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We are 13 girls and 12 boys who have discussed issues of violence against children, which takes place in our countries and in the region. In the last two days we have shared our experiences, concerns and achievements in taking action against violence. We looked at gaps and made recommendations. Our discussions focused on three types of violence: physical and psychological punishment, gender-based violence and child sexual abuse. We then prepared our own initiatives and actions to address these issues.

## **WHERE AND HOW CHILDREN FACE VIOLENCE....**

Physical and psychological violence, gender-based violence and child sexual abuse happen in different degrees in all countries in the region. Violence not only has physical consequences, but also psychological/emotional consequences, which might even affect children more severely. Adults seldom listen to children when they talk about abuse. Some forms of violence are considered taboo. For example, if children try to talk about child sexual abuse, adults are afraid that the community will know about it and that they might be discriminated against. When children tell their families that they have been sexually abused, the family may feel dishonoured and this could even lead to honour killing. If children are abused in school or at home, they do not talk to their friends because they feel ashamed. Some adults abuse children for their own pleasure. In other cases, adults think that punishment is good for children and do not see it as abuse.

Since many adults themselves were beaten or psychologically punished as children they may believe adults must punish children for the children's own good. Also, parents may not know different ways of bringing up children. In many countries, parents think they have a duty to get girls married at a young age. Young brides may be tortured and harassed by their husband's family for not understanding family matters. We also discussed many other forms of gender-based violence. When children suffer violence, they sometimes learn to fight violence with violence. This is how cycles of violence are continued.

## **WE ALSO DISCUSSED CAUSES OF VIOLENCE...**

Sometimes cultural, traditional and/or religious practices can be harmful for children. At times poverty can cause neglect and violence, if parents do not have enough money to educate their children or to fulfil their needs. Patterns of violence are also reproduced from one generation to another, making it a cycle. Adults, such as teachers, may lack knowledge of children's rights or the effects of physical and psychological punishment. Discrimination and unequal power relations in society also make violence against children worse. Some countries do not have laws on violence against children, or their laws may not be enough to protect children. Often children are not aware of how to get legal help. There are not enough counselling and psychosocial services to rehabilitate children who have been abused.

# WORDBANK

Abolish	Put an end to, to do away with.
Abuse	Bad treatment that causes physical or mental harm
Arbitrator/ mediator	Someone who helps opposing sides in an argument or conflict come to an agreement
Child abuse	Any kind of harm done to children, including neglect, physical, sexual or mental violence by someone who is responsible for them, or has power over them, that they should be able to trust
Child and youth friendly	Designed for children and young people, and understandable to them
Children's homes	Places where groups of children who don't have parents or whose families cannot look after them, are looked after.
Consultations	Asking people what they think
Detention Centres	Places where people who are accused or found guilty of breaking the law are kept temporarily.
Forum	A public meeting place for open discussion
Honour killings	When families or communities kill people (usually girls or women) in the name of family 'honour'. For example, if a girl has sex outside marriage many families think it is a disgrace and dishonour to the family, so the community or the family decides to kill the girl to protect family honour.
Masculinity	The concept of a person being tough, independent, having the tendency to suppress his/her emotions and possibly using violence to solve any problem.
Monitor	To keep track and to keep close watch over
Task Force	A group of people who work together to achieve a specific goal.
United Nations	The United Nations is an organisation where leaders from nearly all the countries of the world meet and talk about ways to make the world a safe place. They also find ways to make lives of adults and children better all over the world.



