FOREWORD

For the last three years, Plan India has been holding a National Conference pertaining to issues of children. The effort put into these National Conferences have been remarkable in several ways. First of all, the planning and focus of the National Conference is very important and in this Plan India has been tremendously successful, as the present Report for the Third National Conference 2018 demonstrates. Then, the expertise and commitment of the speakers and the passion that they have for children has been overflowing, as page after page suggests. Finally, the involvement of children, and not their mere participation, as the primary stakeholder all through the year is more than evident from the Report.

Why is Plan India making all these efforts? It is the desire of Plan India to make life more comfortable and definitely better for all children, particularly young girls. Isn’t that a good enough reason? But there is more to it – Plan India and indeed all of us have a solemn obligation to ensure that the fruits of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are passed on to children so that they are assured of a life of dignity. Unless all of us put our hands and hearts together for children, we are putting our future and that of the planet at risk. In addition, we are obligated to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that we have accepted as our commitment to humanity including, of course, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is keeping this in mind that Plan India chose its theme ‘Girls Get Equal’ for the National Conference 2018. The focus, therefore, was clear and Plan India worked single-mindedly in that direction.

The three themes selected are extremely relevant and timely and relate to the prevention and safeguarding the rights of the girl child, justice and accountability for children and responses towards a just future. The sessions, based on these themes, had several aspects directly related to the subject of discussion. So, there was the association and involvement of the four pillars of democracy and more importantly civil society that has a key role in the safeguarding the rights and interests of
children, particularly the girl child. The planning exercise meant that Plan India had to be in touch with hundreds of concerned citizens all over the country and understand the challenges faced and the possible solutions that could be discussed in the theme relating to responses. What is of significance in the entire exercise is that the grass-root reality was available but the views of children were also taken – children being the most important component in the planning and focus exercise. This is what made the National Conference so special and the insights given in the Report so valuable and functional.

The expertise and diversity of the speakers and thinkers has added great weight to the National Conference as is evident from the Report. There has been participation from several disciplines from all over the country and this has given a global view of the various facets and nuances of the themes of the National Conference. The significance of the variety of speakers and thinkers is not only the content of their presentations and the discussions held by them, but their coming together for a noble cause. While there could be, and is, divergence of views on almost every subject of intellectual discourse, there is unanimity in thinking that we must expend energy and make concerted efforts to improve the living condition of children in all aspects touched upon by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals, be it something as simple as physical development or training in life skills or encouraging education.

The efforts by Plan India are not confined to the days when the National Conference was held – it was a yearlong exercise with interaction with speakers and thinkers from a wide spectrum of society and more importantly State level consultations were held with children from all parts of the country. It is this massive effort that culminated in the National Conference and motivated all participating speakers and thinkers to be free and frank in the expression of views during the discussions and presentations. This led eventually to perhaps the most critical component and challenge of the National Conference – the responses and recommendations.

Where do we go from here and how? This is the real test that we face – we may have the desire, commitment and sincerity, but unless a clear direction is given, we will be floundering at the expense of the future of the children of the country. The responses and recommendations emerging from the National Conference are salutary, but should they remain on paper only to be recalled next year? Implementation strategies and success are keys to improving the living conditions of children and particularly the girl child. Plan India has shown the way through the National Conference but the governments, Central and State, must put their weight behind fulfilling the obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. Otherwise, discussions and presentations will continue without benefitting the children for whom all these efforts have been made. There are several simple solutions that have emerged from the National Conference and some that would take time to implement, but the moment to start the ball rolling is now.

Hopefully, the Report of the Third National Conference 2018 on ‘Plan for Every Child: Girls Get Equal’ will get the attention it deserves. On my part, I certainly commend it to the policy and decision makers.

1st March, 2019

(Madan B. Lokur)
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ACRONYMS

AWSA: Attitude Toward Women Scale for Adolescents  
AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome  
BPRD: Bureau of Police Research and Development  
CCI: Child Care Institutions  
CDDC: Children in Difficult Circumstances  
CSO: Civil Society Organisation  
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility  
CWC: Child Welfare Committee  
DCPU: District Child Protection Unit  
FIR: First Information Report  
GDP: Gross Domestic Product  
GVI: Gender Vulnerability Index  
HAMA: Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956  
HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
HRC: Human Rights Council  
IAMAI: Internet and Mobile Association of India  
IBM: Information and Broadcasting Ministry  
ICDS: Integrated Child Development Scheme  
ICPS: Integrated Child Protection Scheme  
IEC: International Electrotechnical Commission  
ILO: International Labour Organisation  
IPC: Indian Penal Code  
IT Act: Information Technology Act, 2000  
JAI: Juvenile Justice Act (Care and Protection of Children), 2015  
LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual  
MDG: Millennium Development Goals  
MGREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005  
NCERT: National Council of Education Research and Training  
NCP: National Commission for Protection of Child Rights  
NCRB: National Crime Records Bureau  
NCW: National Commission for Women  
NDPS: Narcotic, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985  
NDSO: National Data on Sexual Offenders  
NFHS: National Family Health Survey  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation  
NHRC: National Human Rights Council  
NITI Aayog: National Institution for Transforming India  
PCPD: The Pre Conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994  
PIL: Public Interest Litigation  
PCCS: Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012  
PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  
RTE: Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009  
SCPCR: State Commission for Protection of Child Rights  
SDG: Sustainable Development Goals  
UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS  
UNDP: United Nations Development Programme  
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund  
USAID: United States Agency for International Development  
MWDC: Ministry of Women and Child Development  

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plan International and Plan India, as a part of their global and national strategies, have put forth a strong commitment to support the 2030 Global Goals. With the vision of ‘Girls Get Equal’, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development has gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at its core. Building on this, the third National Conference ‘Plan for Every Child: Girls Get Equal’ was organised from December 5-7, 2018 in New Delhi, India. The 2018 National Conference had a multi-fold objective, including to discuss and deliberate on issues through participatory sessions and discussions, which stood as the key feature of the conference. The sessions included presentations and discussions under the ambit of Justice for Children, Judiciary and Law Enforcement by more than 100 acclaimed academics, policy makers, development practitioners, members of the media, corporate representatives, opinion leaders and experts from across the globe. The Conference led to further strengthening of the network and coalition of stakeholders working with girls, and deliberations from the conference will help form the framework for influencing policymakers and supporting practitioners at the national and state level as well as communities and youth at the grassroots level.

The focus of the Plan for Every Child initiative is on reaching out to every child still denied her/his rights such as education, dignity, privacy, protection and freedom. The idea of putting the last child first is critical as it draws attention to children who are deprived of their rights. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders and citizens to ensure the well-being of every child in the country. The progress of the country is in fact predicated on the contributions of both girls and boys. The Third National Conference on Plan for Every Child: Girls Get Equal was a result of this larger dream, to achieve gender equality through gender transformation.

Plan India also brought the voices of children from different parts of the country to the national level through four regional consultations. To this end, Plan India collaborated with Sesame Workshop India (SWI), an educational organisation that uses the power of muppets and media to elucidate, amplify, and address children’s views of their own safety and protection. Findings and recommendations of children between 5 to 10 years of age from Bihar, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra were presented during the Conference to policy makers and other stakeholders by children from the states and muppet characters from SWI, creating awareness among children and audience members in attendance.

Conference speakers discussed various issues and challenges they encounter while creating a safer environment for children. The need for gender transformative education for both girls and boys; better use of technology and social media to track missing and street-connected children; a collaboration of formal and informal systems for better implementation of laws, schemes, policies and programmes; prevention of gender injustice and accountability by the authorities were discussed, among others.

The three-day agenda brought rich and varied perspectives on prevention, system strengthening, safeguarding children and their rights, justice for children and the response towards a just future. From the discussions, it emerged that the Ministry of Women and Child development, has various programmes to ensure children’s rights are realised; the ministry has also started using technology as a major source of gathering and providing information. However, it was pointed out by the speakers that there is a lack of awareness about those initiatives among the masses. Moreover, discussions indicated the need to conduct more surveys to build evidence to capture the magnitude of the issue and collect accurate data.

Emphasis was also laid on the need to change patriarchal mind-sets and the normalisation of gender discrimination. There are no dearth of laws, but their implementation is a challenge due to which a rigorous implementation of laws with punitive measures is required. This, it was pointed out, necessitates the allocation of adequate financial resources. For sustainable development of children and their communities, focus is required at the grassroots level and commitment of all the stakeholders is necessary. Speakers also presented the need for development and establishment of child friendly courts for effective delivery of justice.

The second day focused on Justice and Accountability. Findings from the discussions suggest that there is a need to look for non-institutional ways of care for children. Moreover, the management and allocation of resources should take place in a way that they reach the children. Policies and programmes must be designed and implemented to decrease the number of repeat offenders in juvenile homes by providing skill building and psychological support.

Furthermore, it is critical to improve the quality of education especially amongst girls. Labour force participation and decision making need to be encouraged among women. Speakers agreed that a holistic approach is needed by society for the
effective implementation of any programme with respect to children. With regard to planning and delivering gender justice, it was discussed that childcare agencies should undertake children’s rehabilitation and re-integration into mainstream society. Speakers highlighted the need to plumb the depth of the issue, whom to include during the planning stage, identify what needs to change, and more. They called for the inclusion of both girls and boys in the process of change. In terms of technology, it was stated that Police data could be used to identify and locate hubs of crimes. Further, exposure and capacity building needs to be provided to agencies dealing with cyber-crime. Strong regulation should be exercised for technology service providers in order to reduce the number of cyber-crimes.

The third and final day focused on culminating the discussion, by bringing expert perspectives on the response towards a Just Future for Children, especially girls. The discussions brought out the need for gender transformative approach and its measurement. Speakers reflected on the Sustainable Development Goals and the need to have standardised, consistent and appropriately disaggregated data. Utilising a gender lens and including the perspectives of women, girls and the community in research were considered paramount by many speakers, as was bringing the evidence back to the community. Experts discussed measuring gender transformation and provided recommendations on framing, structuring, designing, collecting, handling, analysing, communicating, disseminating and comparing data, as it has bearings on outcomes and accountability.

Finally, speakers discussed integrated approaches to gender justice, and outlined pathways for the future. Recommendations on the priorities, and opportunities for the advancement of girls’ rights were discussed and a key element of these deliberations included the roles of different actors, tools, social institutions and sociocultural norms, in dealing with the issues of children and their rights on a multi-sectoral front. Specifically, experts suggested gaining an understanding of the prevalent social norms and considering their impact and influence on society in the design of policy and schemes. Behaviour change is necessary to change the way children, especially girls, are treated in society, within the community and within the family. The conference also focused on issues of street-connected children, trafficking and exploitation of children, missing children, issues with children’s shelter homes and consolidated approaches to create a safe environment and society for children.

BACKGROUND OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

The Plan for Every Child (P4EC) initiative, in solidarity with national and international efforts led by Plan India and the larger Plan International Federation, focuses on reaching out to every child in difficult circumstances towards their wellbeing, well-being and right to a dignified life. Justice for Children stands as the foundation of our approaches of which Gender and Social Inclusion form an integral part, across Plan India’s portfolio. Plan India recognises that girls and young women from marginalised communities are not just at risk due to their vulnerable circumstances, but also because of the compounding impact of their gender and identity. The obstacles to a just and fulfilling life presented to these children are large and imminent. Plan India has consistently partnered with the government, statutory institutions, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), United Nations agencies, grass-roots communities, as well as youth and child networks, to highlight the issues of children. Upholding justice for all requires multi-dimensional, concerted and coordinated effort, no stakeholder can affect sustainable change in isolation. Plan India thus aims to strengthen partnerships at all levels.

Plan India’s first Plan For Every Child National Conference was held from November 23-25, 2016 and the second National Conference was held from November 1-3, 2017. Carrying forward the lessons from the previous annual conferences, Plan India organised the third National Conference from December 5-7, 2018 in New Delhi. The Conference became a point of confluence for Government officials, CSOs, NGOs, media and other stakeholders committed to working with children, raising concerns about issues affecting them and coming together to address and resolve the same.

1. Walking the Talk: Girls and Their Rights in the Current Paradigm
2. Prevention of Gender Based Violence: The Need for Research and Evidence Building
3. From Safety Nets to Springboards: Putting the Last Girl First
   i. Role of Media
   ii. Role of Communities and Grassroots Institutions
   iii. Role of Legislature
   iv. Role of Executive
4. Recommendations on Putting the Last Girl First
5. Justice and Accountability: Enablers and Barriers
6. Make our World Safe: Who’s Accountable?
7. In Pursuit of Gender Justice
   i. Planning for Gender Justice
   ii. Delivering for Gender Justice
8. Technology and Rights: Does it enable or does it deny?
9. Moving the Needle: Measuring Gender Transformation
10. Integrated Approaches to Gender Justice
Ms. Smita Bharti and Chamki, the conference moderators formally welcomed all the guests and participants to Plan India’s Third National Conference in partnership with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to strengthen its ‘Plan for Every Child’ Initiative. This year’s conference theme was ‘Girls Get Equal’, with a focus on three critical pillars to create an equal world and future—Prevention, Justice and Accountability, and Response. The Conference aimed at justice for children and system strengthening to safeguard child rights with eminent speakers, including judges, officers from different Government departments, State Governments dealing with children’s issues, experts and practitioners of child rights from national and international spheres.

Ms. Rathi Vinay Jha, Chairperson, Plan India Governing Board, spoke about the objective of the conference towards enabling a cohesive policy framework to address the situation of children for knowledge sharing and knowledge building with different stakeholders who are leading the change. She stated that the larger aim should be cooperation and collaboration of Ministry, NGOs and children, which is how the conference was designed and came into being. Working in partnership, she said, is imperative towards building a better India. The theme of the conference is Justice for Children, which calls for preventive and responsive approaches. Therefore, it is critical to understand the issues that affect very young children. Ms. Jha also laid emphasis on the need to ensure that smaller challenges relating to child protection are not overlooked while addressing the larger issues at hand. She praised Plan India’s continuous efforts to strengthen the environment for children, especially girls, and to keep reminding all stakeholders to put in their best efforts to safeguard children in difficult circumstances.

Ms. Indu from Nalgonda district, Telangana, was invited to share her powerful story and spoke on how her life has been transformed through Plan India’s interventions. Not so long ago, she used to go to work instead of school, helping her mother who was part of the agricultural sector. She was only 12 years old when she began supporting her family through a financial crisis. She explained that majority of the girls in her village were facing the same difficulties. That is, until Plan India successfully intervened four years ago and changed the education scenario for the children in her village. Plan India ensured that all children go to school by forming various committees for children such as the Child Protection Committee (CPC), under which principals and school teachers, Anganwadi Workers and Sarpanches were brought together as members (of these committees). The committees ensure that children, especially girls, attend school on a regular basis, are not forced to rescue and assist children in distress within labour.

Ms. Indu, Young Voice

Mr. Govind Nihalani, Chair Emeritus, Plan India Governing Board, next unveiled a short film on Child Labour and Protection

Mr. Rakesh Srivastava, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, said that every child has a right to a dignified life, which is free from exploitation and abuse. The safety and security of all its children has always been integral to the Constitution of India. He mentioned that Article 39 (F) of the Constitution provides equal opportunities and facilities to all so that they may develop a healthy life with freedom and dignity. The Indian Government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, which affirms that children have distinct and unavoidable rights rather than being objects of care or child protection. He emphasised that it is a basic responsibility of every individual to ensure a safe and protected childhood for every child.

Furthermore, he mentioned that the Government of India has taken various initiatives, enacted various acts and amended certain laws to ensure child protection and safety. He spoke about the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act, 2012), which is a gender-neutral act and protects children against sexual harassment, sexual assault and pornography. The POCSO act also has an online complaint management system with the help of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPGR) where anonymity and assistance is provided. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 provides a comprehensive mechanism to deal with children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law. The Juvenile Justice Act creates a child friendly justice system. He also highlighted that many of the policies of the Government of India have been influenced by Supreme Court Judgements.

Additionally, he spoke of various initiatives taken by the Government of India like the Integrated Child Protection Services scheme which has been implemented across the country. Under the Child Protection Scheme, many initiatives were taken to protect and create a healthy environment for children. The ‘Beti Bachao Beti Padhao’ scheme focuses on the education and development of girls without discrimination. Initially, the scheme was started in 100 districts, then expanded to another 161 districts. The Child helpline number 1098 is a nationwide service currently active in 500 districts and 84 railway stations; it is a program to rescue and assist children in distress within…
60 minutes. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, has also developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document to search and trace missing and runaway children, and to prevent kidnappings and trafficking of children. One of the major concerns that has come to light is that children who are reunited with their families tend to run away again due to prevailing circumstances at home. A national portal known as Track Child/Khoya Paya has been set up, which has data not only on missing children, but also a live database to monitor the progress of children who have been found and are availing various services in the Child Care Institutions (CCIs) across the country. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is planning to merge the various portals created for different purposes under child protection to make one unified portal. In 2019, the Ministry also developed a National Plan of Action for Children, 2016 in accordance with the National Policy for Children, 2013.

Mr. Srivastava further spoke about the much-needed amendments in the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, such as making the District Magistrate more active and involved in the implementation of juvenile justice system by introducing quarterly reporting by Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and quarterly appraisal of CWC Chairperson and members by the District Magistrate.

He also mentioned that it takes a sustainable multi-sectoral, integrated, inclusive and focused approach to strengthen the capacities of families and communities through social protection initiatives. This approach has involved all the stakeholders from relevant ministries and state bodies to Panchayati Raj Institutions and children at large, and proposed a road map to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, he added that child and gender budgeting is now included in the main budget rather than annexures, which demonstrates the importance of the issue. There has also been inclusion of children from CCIs in the mainstream. The Ministry initiated ‘Hausla’ in 2017, under which children in CCIs across the country participate in various competitions such as sports, drawing and painting, debates etc. to recognise and facilitate young talent. He added that the Ministry has also been working closely with NGOs as most Government programmes and schemes are implemented by NGOs.

Thereafter, a video message from Ms. Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children was shared with the audience. Ms. Marta Santos Pais congratulated Plan India for organising a conference on child protection. She spoke about the continuous efforts of South Asia to protect children from violence. There are various regional and national programmes and strategies implemented by these countries to combat children’s issues. She emphasised the crucial measures adopted by India to ensure children’s rights, survival, protection, development and participation. The Indian National Plan of Action for Children 2016, is a very important step towards protection of children. It focuses on co-ordination between all stakeholders including Ministries, State Governments, civil society organisations, institutions, societies and children. The country is moving a step forward to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with respect to gender transformation, with a comprehensive and evaluating framework. The Sustainable Development Goals 2030, Article 16.2 talks about eliminating all kind of violence against children. With these goals, child protection has gained new avenue. From her experience, she has realised that children truly need security and justice. Ms. Marta Santos Pais stressed upon the following five strategic actions combined to prevent violence and abuse of children:

- Legal prohibition against child violence and harmful activities against children.
- Public policies to ensure family support and avoid neglect and abuse towards child.
- Positive social behaviour, which can empower children to speak up against any kind of misdeed.
- Strong political leadership for successful implementation of various laws and programmes.
- Strengthening and widening alliances, especially at the community or city level.

Keynote address: Walking the Talk: Girls and their Rights in the Current Paradigm

Prof. Dr. Puja Kapali, Associate Professor of Law, Hong Kong University, delivered the keynote address on the ‘pathways for gender justice a critical intersexual framework’. She presented an analytical framework, which carried the potential for transformative change in gender. While international human rights seek to safeguard the right of all human beings to live a life with dignity, the implementation of these rights require different pathways to attain equality and dignity, and for said rights to be meaningfully accessible for all. Programmes which are applicable to specific groups based on a single identity fail to deliver on promises of equality and justice. These approaches are premised on a function based on single identity categories, into which individuals fit, but they do not encompass the whole community. An intersectional approach for tackling humanitarian crisis should be integrated across various departments spanning legal to education.

International committees have repeatedly drawn attention to certain grounds of discrimination but fail to call out contextual or cultural factors which play a major role in gender discrimination amongst other things. The challenge faced is both conceptual and substantive. The conceptual challenge results in a substantive challenge in terms of gender justice and accessibility for populations whose voices get diminished as a result of improper functionality of the system. The system follows a designed protocol which is theoretically and technically precise but fails to deliver expected outcomes. Whenever such an approach fails, the system ends up blaming the communities and local governments, putting aside lack of judgement and responsibility that lies within the framework itself. There are major UN entities that focus on intersectional approaches that need to come alive for all children, especially those who are multiple marginalized. That being said, knowledge and implementation remain the key.

On a concluding note, she said that intersectional analysis and working together with agencies and partners who have expertise and resources, which the system lacks, could move the needle forward towards achieving gender responsive justice and protection. In the end, she quoted, Ms. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, who said, “It is often forgotten that women and girls are not only helpless victims but they are sources of power to cope, power to prevent, power to reduce risk, power for resilience of transformation into building back after crisis.”

Ms. Marya Shakti, Political Editor, CNN- News 18, shared stories from her years of experience as a journalist. She accepted that media should be, and is, guilty of not covering the children who are victims. The problem according to her is that the media needs to understand their role towards mitigating the struggles of children. She said that the English media did not do justice while covering the Muzaffarpur Shelter Home case, which called into question the very existence of protection mechanisms for children. She indicated her agreement with the Supreme Court of India, which said that the children living in shelter homes or orphans are considered lesser citizens by the media in comparison to children in families. The media gave a political turn to the Muzaffarpur child abuse incident and the children involved were not given any coverage. She identified that the problem with media is that while covering issues of women and children, they end up covering only the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. She appreciated the efforts of social media in highlighting unheard voices at a national platform unlike electronic media, which revolves around the Indian political class. She pointed out that while reading the FIR report of the Muzaffarpur abuse incident, she realised that
Girls Get Equal

almost half of the girls and boys have been victims of violence. She stated that violence and the concept of violence. She recalled the struggle of women, as only verbal empowerment of women is seen and very little support is given to girls by the state, family as well as community. She concluded by highlighting a paradox that can be seen in the country: we talk about the Women’s Reservation Bill and women empowerment when the core issue of women’s safety and security prevails. The main concern is to understand the depth and the root cause of certain practices. All stakeholders must be involved while dealing with these issues.

Keynote Address: Prevention of Gender based Violence: The Need for Research and Evidence Building.

Dr. Shireen Jejeebhoy, Member, Plan India Governing Board, commended the continuous breadth and depth of work and commitment of Plan India towards child protection, gender equality and other such issues. She mentioned that India has also been committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals regarding gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The real issue however, is that even after these commitments, violence against adolescents and young people remains widespread. According to Dr. Jejeebhoy, the key challenge between forward-looking policies and programmes and the reality of pervasive violence is the limited evidence that captures the magnitude of violence. Her focus has been purely on the need to build a strong evidence base to understand violence against young girls and women. She recalled the United Nations definition of violence, which clarifies the concept of violence. She stated that violence and discrimination begins even before a child is born, which is why the Pre-Concept and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act (PCPNDT Act) came into existence. The dismal child sex ratio reflects gender biased sex selection practices. Almost one-fifth of boys and one-third of girls in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have seen fathers beat their mothers, whereas almost half of the girls and boys have been victims of corporal punishment at home, which generates a cycle of violence. The national data is missing with regard to non-consensual sex. The data on violence post marriage is also not available as most incidents go unreported. She pointed out that the data is confusing because all the reports have exceptionally different figures on the same issues. For instance, one report states that 2 in 5 girls reported having experienced sexual violence in the last year whereas the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) states that 1 in 5 girls reported on the matter. Even the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report states that very few report on crimes against young girls and boys.

The issue of crime and violence against girls and women is persistent because of the intractable and underlying factor of patriarchy, which underscores male entitlement in financial issues and a host of others too. The poor understanding of the law and legal counselling is a result of third party sources which are unreliable, as well as a lack of facilities which are limited in practice. Most of the reports were able to highlight the issues qualitatively but not quantitatively. The data and evidence in Understanding the Lives of Adolescents and Young Adults (UDAYA) study shows a considerably higher rate and greater depth than NFHS reports. The NCRB data is not segregated gender-wise and is quite incomplete. According to her, private young researchers can help in building the data and evidence by conducting dedicated surveys as they can provide detailed information and explore new areas. Gender specific data collected with guaranteed anonymity can elicit truthful and realistic responses. Group-based standard transformative life skills, educational programmes for girls that provide safe spaces and help develop their agency, awareness on rights loss and services, as well as new notions of feminism and masculinities, including in the area of violence, have shown promise and must be further developed in terms of evidence. There has not been much success in terms of evaluation of programmes that addressed parental needs. The data gap that needs to be filled lies at the system level itself. There is a need to sensitise duty bearers, whether frontline workers, teachers or locally elected leaders, so they can fulfill their role of informing communities about the kind of mediators and supportive services available in their communities and the quality of services therein.

In summation, she stated that there is a need to pay more attention to measurement, better crime reporting, more periodic surveys and evolution of programmes, in order to create an evidence based analysis of the situation.

THEME 1: ROLE OF MEDIA

Chair
Mr. Pankaj Pachauri, Editor-in-Chief, GoNews

Panelists
• Ms. Anuradha Nagraj, Journalist, Thomson Reuters Foundation
• Mr. Davinder Kumar, Global Media Manager, Plan International
• Mr. Gyanendra Pandey, Editor, Dainik Bhaskar
• Ms. Ritu Kapur, Co-Founder and CEO, Quintillion Media

The session deliberated on the role of media on the issue of child protection and child rights awareness. The main issues covered were gender inequality, impact of pop-culture, access to technology, poverty and the issue of bonded labour. Various recommendations were made towards gender sensitisation.
Mr. Pankaj Pachauri, Editor-in-Chief, GoNews
Chair of the session addressed the various critical issues related to gender inequality, discrimination and poverty, saying that every country around the globe and considering the scenario of India, emphasised the role that the Indian media plays in handling them. He began by engaging the audience on how the media, with their influence on the masses, has the potential to shape perceptions and thinking. Celebrities have occupied the media, whether it is social media, television news channels or print media, and how these media platforms shape the perception and thinking of audiences, reflecting culture so to speak.

In his entire career, he states having witnessed that gender inequality has deep roots in Indian culture where the main concern of every household is the marriage of the daughter in the house. The fact that girls are unable to achieve their dreams is not only because of the financial status of their family but also their mindset which does not allow girls to pursue anything beyond their perceived, often stereotypical responsibilities of hearth and home. The degree to which this concept has been normalised has created barriers which are difficult to cross individually and requires collective efforts from women and men. The media is also an integral part of developing these ideologies in the manner in which they portray women to the audience. Women face issues such as poverty, which is a severe lack of family support for them. Mr. Pachauri reflected upon pop culture and its contributions to these ideologies of discrimination against women. The insights and contributions of women are blurred by the dominance and influence of men in every field. Even if they are considered important, he pondered with the audience upon whether their work is recognised and at what level.

Mr. Davinder Kumar, Editor, Dainik Bhaskar, shared his experience of travelling to different countries and dwelled upon how different countries have different forms of inequality and discrimination. He stated that these issues exist everywhere but in different degrees, and the perceptions surrounding these challenges are very different. He spoke about how some barriers have been lifted and the reality of the issue has been given visibility in different places with the help of the media. Whether it is Asia, South Africa or Latin America, the struggle to eradicate the issues is still ongoing. The steps which are being taken are small and necessary. Local government and communities are taking initiatives to address these issues. However, the bigger way to work on this is to change mindsets and create a movement that people can be part of. The audience understands the importance of acceptance can help when the situation is widespread and intense. The media should work towards establishing the rights of women and further promoting them.

Ms. Anuradha Nagraj, Journalist, Thomson Reuters Foundation, spoke about the current state of most girls and women in India. Due to lack of freedom and financial resources, they are unable to accomplish things to which they aspire. The way media has normalised and established the role of women has been a concern due to its imbalance. Bureaucrats, although aware of the situation, state that there is nothing they can do. This is a classic example indicating the level at which the issue is normalised, and that nobody regards it as a problem, she said. She believes print media to be a strong influence from women's perspective and that the influence of social media is not something to be ignored. Acknowledgment should be given to the voices that have been taken in situations when it seems that the voices are not being heard.

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Mr. Gyanendra Pandey, Editor, Dainik Bhaskar, shared his experience of travelling to different countries and dwelled upon how different countries have different forms of inequality and discrimination. He stated that these issues exist everywhere but in different degrees, and the perceptions surrounding these challenges are very different. He spoke about how some barriers have been lifted and the reality of the issue has been given visibility in different places with the help of the media. Whether it is Asia, South Africa or Latin America, the struggle to eradicate the issues is still ongoing. The steps which are being taken are small and necessary. Local government and communities are taking initiatives to address these issues. However, the bigger way to work on this is to change mindsets and create a movement that people can be part of. The audience understands the importance of acceptance can help when the situation is widespread and intense. The media should work towards establishing the rights of women and further promoting them.

Given the choice between discrimination and poverty, he emphasised that discrimination feeds poverty, so prioritising discrimination is important. The ratio of women in comparison to men is critically low in all sectors, with women having a pronounced lack of power in society, whether in top management jobs or any other circumstance. The creation of laws to address these issues might be seen in many countries but their enforcement needs to be strengthened. He appealed to the media to be straightforward when addressing issues where societal norms are challenged. The way girls and women are depicted in media should be reflected upon and changed, as media can create an enormous scope for change if these issues are portrayed sensitively. According to him, given the media's influence on the Indian audience, it comes from a perspective where media, most countries and most independent and truly functioning democracies encourage media to cover these issues more. The publishing of news. Therefore, he agreed to the opinion that it is important for newspapers and news channels to dedicate space and time for coverage of gender-related stories. The conversations including and engaging females can be beneficial, which can take place when the media brings to the forefront the positive stories of women’s accomplishments. The importance of creating awareness by depicting reality is as important as showing the positive side of the story.

Mr. Gyandev Pandey, Editor, Dainik Bhaskar, shared his experience of travelling to different countries and dwelled upon how different countries have different forms of inequality and discrimination. He stated that these issues exist everywhere but in different degrees, and the perceptions surrounding these challenges are very different. He spoke about how some barriers have been lifted and the reality of the issue has been given visibility in different places with the help of the media. Whether it is Asia, South Africa or Latin America, the struggle to eradicate the issues is still ongoing. The steps which are being taken are small and necessary. Local government and communities are taking initiatives to address these issues. However, the bigger way to work on this is to change mindsets and create a movement that people can be part of. The audience understands the importance of acceptance can help when the situation is widespread and intense. The media should work towards establishing the rights of women and further promoting them.

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Ms. Ritu Kapur, Co-Founder and CEO, Quintillion Media
focus on the issue of women’s access to phone and internet while talking about the impact of social media. She also illustrated that women have comparatively significantly low access to the privileges of social media. She introduced an initiative, ‘Me the Change’ whose goal is to reach as many female first-time voters as possible and create awareness on how they could arrive at their decision. Though the percentage of engagement is low, the potential of social media according to her is large enough to create an impact. When women are provided a safe place to be heard, and they are able to freely and safely voice their insights, it is a good state of development. Young women are quite active in these initiatives. Given the fact that men are a large part of the country, the focus cannot be only on one gender alone, the dominant gender having the say, but the one that is entitled to make the politically correct might lead to provocation of some issues which are framed, and at some point, these provocations work out to be positive. This helps to strike conversations where engagement levels are high and people are able to relate to the concern. She also stated that tokenism has created fear, further highlighting the manner in which Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of companies are some times used for tokenism.

Key recommendations:
• Course correction is required to deal with the normalisation of gender-related issues that exists;
• Include local government, because that is where the real crux is. Institutions like Anganwadis and others have to be included in the conversation for gender equality;
• Digital media can also be made engaging. An app can be developed that focuses only on one particular issue such as missing children;
• Capacity building and sensitisation of journalists, especially from rural areas, is critical and essential to promote rights based reporting, and to be more creative for positions which generate gender related content;
• Focus needs to be on developing positive stories,

with advertisements in all forms has deviated the audience from the main agenda. He said that a solution to this would be to make the ratio 40:60 with advertisements and news respectively. The coverage of news should be equally allotted too, which not only includes Indian politics, but economics, sports and global news as well. Another point to him, the uniqueness of the content on the reader is also important.
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highlighting best practices, celebrating success stories and use of digital media for two-way conversations and mobilisation;

- Media should shift the focus to perpetrators rather than victims of crimes against children and women, and the widespread use of negative story terminology needs to be discouraged. For example, the use of appropriate terminology should be encouraged, such as words like molestation instead of eve-teasing;

- Including the voices of men and boys in stories and conversations around gender and building the momentum for change with them.

THEME 2: ROLE OF COMMUNITIES AND GRASSROOTS INSTITUTION

Chair
Mr. Andrew Baker
Director, South Asia and China, Plan International

Panellists
- Ms. Anita Kumar, Senior Programme Manager, (South), Plan India
- Dr. Nalini Gangadharan, Chairperson, CAP Foundation
- Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Executive Director, Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses
- Dr. Veerandra Kumar Mishra, Director, National Service Scheme, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India

The session deliberated on the role of communities and grassroots institution on the issue of child protection. The issues which were discussed included child labour in agriculture sector, child labour and children as domestic help, children in clinical drug trials, the challenges in child adoption and its protection. The practice of commercial sexual exploitation of children in different parts of the country is a major concern and can only be curbed if community leaders or village leaders regard it seriously and sensitise other members of the community.

Ms. Anita Kumar, Senior Programme Manager, Plan India shared her experience of working in the southern part of the country, particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha on issues of child protection. She shared that there are more than 2000 child protection committees and more than 2000 children’s groups which are a part of the community based child protection mechanism wherein at least half of the members of these forums are women and girls. She explained that the emphasis of their work around community based child protection mechanism was primarily on two key pillars. One was on child forums and the other, child protection committees. As per the government guidelines, Anganwadi workers and volunteers are members of these committees and members need to be provided adequate training in order to make them efficient in handling major issues around children such as: child marriage, child labour, child sexual abuse, girls’ rights within child rights, and child protection. The next step was of capacity enhancement of these forums and committees in the rural areas. They were empowered to advocate for child rights, and for girls’ rights in particular, and take up the issue with relevant duty bearers including engaging with the administrative structures of block, mandal, district and state levels. She emphasised that if safety of girls was a serious concern, then a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach was needed which stressed on the convergence. She discussed about collaborating with the corporates, nodal agencies and influencing them to invest their CSR resources for girls, particularly for promotion of secondary education and job oriented vocational training for young women as she considers this to be an enabler which can take them a long way forward in life.

Dr. Nalini Gangadharan, Chairperson, CAP Foundation, initiated the discussion with issues related to the street and working children. She said that during her association with street and working children, she felt that police were the worst tormentors of children and if they could convert a tormentor into a mentor then they could reverse the cycle of abuse. The approach resulted in her organisation releasing and rescuing about 9000 children from extremely hazardous working conditions, streets and railway stations. Due to her efforts it became a culture within the police academy of the then Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to include a module on child rights and child protection for training of police personnel. She also worked for Muslim girls and started collaboration with Madrassas. She worked on converting these institutions into schools, brought Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in and finally, it resulted in 84,000 girls going to 909 Madrassas, with the support of USAID and ILO. She emphasised on the role and importance of the government machinery especially judiciary, and gave an example of a judge who engaged 800 paralegal volunteers who visited communities and trained people on relevant acts such as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) Act 2012, and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015. She, along with her team, created modules for training and other IEC material.

She raised the issues of confrontation of ideas among different line departments on child protection and left the audience to ponder over the questions such as: “Do we all understand that child protection is also a risky business? What are the risks in child protection and are we ourselves equipped to handle it?”

Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Executive Director, Society for the Promotion of Youth and Masses, initiated a discussion on substance abuse or drug abuse by the youth. He discussed the reasons and challenges of substance abuse and recited that it is not legal under the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 (NDPS). Under this Act the minimum punishment for taking drugs is 6 months of imprisonment. Quitting drugs is most difficult and even if someone is medically treated for this, they are always at a danger of relapse. This, he felt was the chief reason that family members often do not invest money or time in treatment of the person addicted to drugs. Stigma and discrimination linked with this problem is one of the constraints which has made it difficult and challenging for actors to work in this area. He shared his experience of working with children and informed the participants that children use glue sniffing or volatile solvent. This is a growing concern as it is not recognised as a drug, however, the ill effects could even be worse than other heavy drugs as it kills brain cells and could also affect other body parts. Globally, treatment of children dependent on volatile solvents is difficult and challenging.

He emphasised on the unavailability of data on the number of children or young students in colleges using substance or drugs in any form. He informed that his team had treated almost 3000 children who were using drugs. He also mentioned his experience of working in jail number 5 of Tihar Jail where 60% of children were lodged because, either they were above 18 years of age, or they might have been perceived as 18 plus. Otherwise they would have been in observation homes for children. According to him, 60% of these children had used drugs started using drugs the day they were caught.
Dr. Veerandra Kumar Mishra, Director, National Service Scheme, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, spoke about issues related to child trafficking with special concern on parents selling and trafficking their own children because nobody suspects them as traffickers. He said that the Banchhida community in Madhya Pradesh which is present in many other border states, including Chhattisgarh and Gujarat are into inter-generational sex work. A girl at the age of 12 or 13 faces commercial sexual exploitation, and is pushed into it by her own parents. He also said that 60% of child labour is in the agricultural sector. Another important issue of child trafficking is child soldiers who are used in insurgency areas or in Naxalite areas as combatants. He spoke about clinical drug trials, an issue which many are unaware of. He said that while interacting with approximately 14,000 to 15,000 people including children who reported that drug trials were being conducted on children and when these children die, all the cases of death are reported as natural deaths. Moreover, he spoke about informal adoptions which are not even registered under the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act of 1956 (HAMA) because of the absence of a suitable protocol which can be used to check if the child that is adopted through HAMA, if the procedure was properly followed and if a monetary transaction took place.

He also spoke about the issue of drug use which has been an important issue. The government has been working in Punjab to address drug abuse. However, the challenge is of sustainability of interventions. This, as per him can be resolved with the help of community partnerships. He suggested involving youth from the same community is very important as they are going to stay in the community and they can be crucial in mobilising, motivating and driving impact in the community.

Mr. Andrew Baker, Director, South Asia and China, Plan International and the Chair of the session, summarised the discussion by highlighting the many important issues raised by the panelists, for instance the issue of stigma and discrimination around child sexual abuse, impact of criminality in terms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, the role of different stakeholders like parents, family, communities, teachers, leaders, CSOs, government, media and corporates in safeguarding the rights of children, and girls in particular. The issues of child protection and safeguarding their rights should be tackled in a sensitive manner and a holistic view is needed from all the stakeholders to work collectively for children in difficult circumstances.

Key Recommendations:
- Comprehensive multi-pronged & multi-sectoral approaches at the grass-root levels are required, emphasising convergence across community members, leaders, CSOs, media and the government.
- Focus should be on important issues like poverty, gender social norms, transition into schooling system etc. Key challenges remain poverty, gender social norms and the transitions in to the schooling system.
- Substance abuse amongst girls and boys is another area of concern and therefore consistent efforts need to be undertaken to prevent children from falling through the cracks and rehabilitate children who are victims of substance abuse.
- Socially accepted norms need to be challenged and addressed; as sometimes parents are also involved in girls’ trafficking but they are not considered as traffickers by their community. Such kinds of community based sexual exploitation should be addressed and curtailed as an immediate priority

Dr. K. C. George, Joint Director Public Cooperation Division and National Children’s Fund (NCF), National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Government of India

Panellists
- Ms. Laldikkimi Vannawia, Director Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Mizoram
- Mr. Mohammed Tarique, Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Director, Koshish
- Mr. Shashank Shekhar, Advocate & Former Member, Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

The session chiefly focused on the role that the executive and administrative branch of the government can play in ensuring the safety of children by creating a safety net for them. The speakers discussed about the abuse of children in shelter homes, referring to a recent incident in Bihar as well as the social audit which was conducted earlier in the year. The discussion further went on to highlight the issues that prevail within the establishment and recommended solutions that might be helpful in mitigating the issues at the primary level itself.
Ms. Laldikhami Vanmawia, Director Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Mizoram, shared her experiences of working as an executive in the state of Mizoram. She discussed the importance of gender sensitisation, a concern which has come under the spotlight very recently. According to her, executives are aware of the challenges of the establishment and the implementation structure, development performance norms etc. She discussed various challenges, which she faced while dealing with child protection as an executive. Mentioned below are some of them:

- Supporting and strengthening family and revival family values is one of the most challenging tasks.
- Changing the mind-sets of people, as people feel that the programmes and schemes announced by state or centre, are perceived as alien invasions, intruding communities;
- The absorption of legal regulations and rules have not been easily accepted;
- Non-provision of funds for different committees, programmes and/or schemes is one of the weaknesses of the system;
- Residential staff such as caretakers, maid etc. are sometimes held responsible for creating problems specially for NGOs, as the cost of maintenance is not covered under per month allowance given to each child;
- Staff turnover is another big gap because the roles and responsibilities of the staff do not justify the low salaries;
- Lack of convergence within the establishment in the state of Mizoram.

She elaborated on the points she thought should be accepted by every establishment in order to help children and further shared her recommendations, which are as follows:

- Centralisation, diplomatic or strategic form should be adopted specially at state, district and village levels.
- Planning should be a pivotal part of starting any new law, scheme or act which she observed from Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).
- Need for round the clock administrative support to ensure holistic and comprehensive justice.
- Practice of direct and responsive problem solving communication and swift decision to ensure greater coverage of the target group.
- The line of administration and communication needs to be robust, dynamic and uniform in understanding of the cause. Clarity in their respective roles by administrators, executors etc.
- Both verbal and written performance based incentives to the frontline workers can yield sustainable impact.
- Identification of potential areas, which have improved over time, may serve as a learning and reference for the rest.
- Separate online portal system for processing physical and financial reports.
- Consolidated reports and close coordination within departments like education, health services, police and law.
- Capacity building of key stakeholders in legislation and schemes related to relevant laws.
- Boys should be made aware of gender discrimination as they are often the offenders who need to know the difference between what’s right and wrong.

On a concluding note, she said that the current challenge is at the grassroots level where there must be an injection of total ownership on child protection, care and support for all children, especially the girl child. Mobilisation and strengthening of stakeholders down to the neighbourhood level is crucial.

Mr. Mohammed Tarique, Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Director, Koshish, shared his experience of working along with the executive on social auditing. According to him the biggest failure of the executive or policies is that inability to capture the experiences of the person(s) for whom the policies are designed. Essentially missing the main context, which is how the children are doing or feeling, if they are being abused. While evaluating the programmes, the primary focus is on infrastructure, provisions, capacity building of people etc. In addition to all this to ensure that the report is credible, the child’s approval is a must.

Further, he discussed various challenges like the problem of political commitment, which he sees as the foremost reason for failure of any scheme or programme. According to him the establishment has given the best of laws, schemes and programmes but he questions the commitment of the state in their implementation, which can easily be seen in the budgetary allocations. The chief problem for that of the financial resources provided to ensure good care for children living in institutions. He gave example of grant-in-aid designed to support a child in a Child Care Institution (CCI) which is INF 40 per day for one child’s meal. Although the infrastructure is available very closer to these institutions but there is lack of human resources to take the kids to school. The institutions also face a problem of financial resources and support. Delayed payments and low payments result in fewer staff. Very progressive policies may make the approach and perspective is not helping people to implement it. There is a need to build a bridge of understanding the approach and reason between the people who design a scheme/ programme and stake holders who are responsible to implement it.

The chief points which he discussed emerged from the social audit conducted in Bihar that brought out the Muzzafarpur shelter home children’s abuse case. This is when he realised that there was a lack of commitment. Due to the social audit conducted in Bihar, other states also started looking into shelter homes, which should have been done a long time ago. After the findings in the report were revealed, there was a lot of chaos and multiple petitions. It is the responsibility of the bureaucracy to take care of the children and ensure corrective measures are taken in that direction.

He gave certain recommendations like redesigning the monitoring framework, including the participation of children in the process. He said that no evaluation report is complete unless the children agree to the report. The evaluation should be based on the rate of rehabilitation, which should be the central point when evaluating organisations. He felt that the basic issues that need to be addressed are in the implementation phase such as underpaid workers and their commitment.

Mr. Shashank Shekhar, Advocate & Former Member, Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights explained the importance of the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) which was set up in Bihar even before State Child Protection Society (SCPS). He stated that women’s rights starts from girls’ rights and even before the birth of a child, the rights are inherited by them and they need to be protected. He shared the importance of the right to life, which includes right to survival, right to development, right to participation and right to protection. He said that many times the concept of right to life is not interpreted right to survival, forgetting the other three important rights. All these rights are supposed to be received in one single package.

Furthermore, he discussed the issue of child marriage persistent across India. He also pointed out the challenge of inaccurate statistical reporting of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and raised many questions in this context. Mr. Shekhar shared his experience in stopping a child marriage with the help of a Senior Police Constable and other police officers instead of going to the child marriage protection officer. He also shared his experience of coming across many missing children as part of an executive function, while implementing the Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE) in Delhi. In that particular situation, he took the help of the Station House Officer to trace 150 children out of missing 200. On many occasions he interacted with members of Child Welfare Committee (CWC), DASP etc. He said that it was a vicious cycle of non-cooperation within these departments. In addition, he also identified gaps within the monitoring process. He implied that all the agencies both government and non-governmental will have to work together to help children who are at the core of these issues.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Right to life, which includes right to survival, participation, development and education for all should be received as one package;
- Effective implementation is required at the grassroots level;
- Commitment of all stakeholders working towards children, especially girls, to work as one team.
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THEME 4: ROLE OF LEGISLATURE

Chair
Mr. Himalaya Muktan Shangpliang, Member of Legislative Assembly, East Khasi Hills; Meghalaya, Government of India

Panellists
- Mr. Arunav Kaul, Research Associate-Policy, Daksh
- Ms. Jyotica Bhasin, Practicing Advocate
- Prof. Dr. Jyoti Dogra Sood, Associate Professor of Law, Indian Law Institute
- Prof. Dr. Sanjai Bhatt, Organising Chairperson and President, NAPSWI, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi
- Mr. Vikram Srivastava, Founder, Independent Thought

The session deliberated on the role of legislature while drafting the laws for children, legal provisions for children and different regulations to curb the issues related to child protection. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 1986 was amended in 2015. One of the major challenges that was highlighted during the discussion was the shortage of judges in the judiciary system. Due to this shortage, sometimes priority is given to cases registered under different sections of the IPC, and as a result cases registered under POCSO face non-compliance of timeliness. Violence of any kind against the children despite of the laws and acts which are strict enough to punish the culprits was a major concern.

Mr. Arunav Kaul, Research Associate-Policy, Daksh, shared his experience of working with judges and State Governments and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POCSO), the number of cases filed has gradually increased over the years. As per the NCRB data, about 90,000 cases related to POCSO were pending in 2016. He primarily discussed about the infrastructure and timeliness aspects. He felt that there should be a child-friendly atmosphere in fact litigant friendly atmosphere that includes basic amenities and basic infrastructure for the judges, staff, and litigants and of course, for the children. The judiciary and legislature needs to be more sensitive in terms of how the infrastructure should be provided especially for children because they are traumatised. He also mentioned that in 2016-17 about 2 crore cases were filed across the country and we have around 17,000 to 18,000 judges to deal with all of those. For POCSO Act there is a special judge who is expected to deal with POCSO matters only, however, while going through several studies, one finds that the judge doesn’t solely deal with POCSO cases, but with other cases as well. He suggested that more scientific studies were needed to see the optimum number of cases allotted to judges based on the number of cases they are dealing with. It is also important to ensure that the judges stick to timelines, and if they don’t, then they should be held accountable.

Ms. Jyotica Bhasin, Practicing Advocate, shared her insights on the judicial pronouncements in the past few years affecting child protection concerns. She also discussed certain aspects of the legal perspective, particularly addressing effectiveness and loopholes. She spoke about the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act. The Act has made many provisions related to the employment of children. For instance, anyone under the age of 14 cannot be employed in industries under hazardous working conditions. However, there is no clarity on provision for children working within a family run enterprise. She also spoke about the Right to Education Act which guarantees right to education for every person up to the age of 14 years. Combining the provisions of these two Acts together raises issues and questions which are worth pondering upon, for instance, what would happen to a child who has been in school for a full day? Would he be forced to drop out of the school? Managing school hours and work together would be very cumbersome for the child. Although there are many provisions in the law related to child protection but so are the loopholes. Due to the vague definition of a family, a contractor might assert his ownership on children saying that he or she belongs to his family. She further spoke about Vishakha, a woman from a rural area in Rajasthan, who fought bravely for her rights and thereafter the guidelines for prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace were laid down. Furthermore, she shared her insights on sexual harassment at the workplace. A child may not be aware of the repercussions or she is being sexually violated. Recent analysis has shown that 52% of boys under the age of 18 have been subjected to some or other form of sexual harassment. She further opined that there should be no timelines for a child to come forth and report sexual abuse. They should feel comfortable enough to report an incident of physical or sexual abuse, which they have experienced, at any point of time. In her closing remarks, she opined that there are already many laws in place but the need of the hour is to effectively execute those laws.

Prof. Dr. Jyoti Dogra Sood, Associate Professor of Law, Indian Law Institute, Delhi flagged the issue of children’s agency and the best interest of a child. She said that some legislations are confusing and she mentioned about the contradictions present under the POCSO and Juvenile Justice Act, irrespective of the fact that both of them deal with child protection issues. The POCSO Act treats child as an assexual being and to talk about child’s sexuality almost seems like a taboo. However, as per the Juvenile Justice System, a child is not assexual and if an adult crime has been committed he should be sent to the adult court. There lies the problem. There is a need to see child related issues in a holistic manner. She opined that the child agency is always neglected as we don’t consider a child as somebody who has an agency to talk about his or her best interests. The best interests of the child cannot be placed against the best interest of society. In fact, the best interest of the child would definitely be in the best interest of the society. Both of these work in tandem.

She closed her remarks by drawing attention to contradictions caused due to the recently amended Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, of 1986. On one hand, a child is kept to work in the family run enterprises and spaces and on the other hand, basic facilities like option of school hours is also demanded which is very problematic. Even labour department will not be able to invigilate whether the child has rested enough or not after coming back from school. Therefore, the child agency should be talked to and dealt with in a holistic way and the provisions related to child welfare issues should be clearly defined.

Prof. Dr. Sanjai Bhatt, Organising Chairperson and President, NAPSWI, Department of Social Work, University of Delhi initiated his remarks by congratulating Plan India for the significant theme of the conference ‘Girls Get Equal’. He said that many legal provisions have been copied from other places with the hope that they would do justice with the social realities of our culture. However, that did not transform into a reality. Indian child labour law mentions the rescue of a child. He added however, that there are not enough shelter homes in place for those children and, even if the
child is put into those homes, there are not enough policemen to safeguard those shelter homes. He shared his experience about working on the issue of rehabilitation of children in UP and Bihar. The list of the rescued children was a very exhaustive one. People do not know what to do with the rescued children. He spoke about the various provisions available for rescued children. One of the important directions given by the Supreme Court in “M.C.Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu” was to direct an employer to pay a compensation of INR 20,000 to have employed a child below the age of 14 years in hazardous work conditions. So, the question is not about whether a law is stringent or not, the question is whether it is effective or not. He said that the effective law should be in tune with the societal demands too otherwise it will not work.

He also talked about Bhanwari Devi, who demanded child rights which further culminated into laying down of sexual harassment clause in her name. He opined that there should be a National Family Enrichment Mission in place because a child should also be seen in the context of a family. There is a need to think about how the smallest democracy of society-family could be strengthened. He closed his remarks by highlighting the importance of strengthening the mechanisms related to missing children. In his conclusion, he highlighted the importance of the role of civil society in law formulation.

Mr. Vikram Srivastava, Founder, Independent Thought, initiated his discussion by highlighting the role of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations in safeguarding the interests of the child. He said that the civil society and NGOs should engage more and more with both legislature and judiciary. He further expressed that the concept of ‘best interest’ of the child was still not understood in the real sense and conceptually there is much that needs to be done on the issue of child participation. He focused his discussion on the importance of engagement of NGOs with the law enforcement agencies. He opined that the convergence between legislative, executive and judiciary is very important in ensuring rights of the child.

He shared that he had filed a PIL in the Supreme Court seeking better implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Such interventions by the Civil Society Organisations push the state and the judiciary to act in an accountable manner. He closed his remarks by adding that the statutory provisions should be effectively used by the NGOs to make the state more accountable in terms of safeguarding the interest of the children.

Key Recommendations:

- Cases filed pertaining to children should be delivered within the timeline. The two major problems affecting the smooth functioning of the legislature is inappropriate infrastructure and pendency in delivering final orders beyond the stipulated time period.

- There’s a need for child friendly atmosphere and infrastructure facilities in courts. Children’s agency has been neglected with reference to the best interests of the child and the best interest of society, which cannot be separated from one another.

- Strong implementation of laws pertaining to children with extremely punitive measures needs to be undertaken.

- NGOs should converge more with judiciary and legislature in order to effectively implement the existing laws and to influence drafting of new laws.

PLENARY SESSION 3: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON PUTTING THE LAST GIRL FIRST
The Plan India National Conference ‘Plan for Every Child’ was graced in the evening on day one by Hon'ble Justice Madan B. Lokur, Supreme Court of India who delivered the keynote address of the National Conference. He was welcomed and introduced by Mr. Ranjan Chak, Member, Governing Board, Plan India. Hon’ble Justice Madan B. Lokur congratulated Plan India on the initiative aimed to address the issue of child protection. He discussed the present scenario in the country and acknowledged that the optimism comes from looking at efforts of organisations like Plan India and others who are working together to improve the condition of children in the country. He mentioned about some positive developments that he observed in the last couple of years, having associated with the issue of child rights. The foremost was the awareness of the existence of child rights, because earlier the rights of children were not considered separately and there was no specific discussion on the matter. The constitution of India provides a special provision that special laws can be framed for the benefit of children. Article 15 of the Constitution has been utilised lately. However, the most important aspect is the implementation of the rights of children. At the same time he expressed concern over the recent negative developments that came to light. He shared that among issues of great concern are prevention of crime by children and against children. The number of crimes committed by children have increased without a doubt but the number of crimes against children has grown exponentially i.e. roughly by 3 times.

He said that this scenario could be looked at it two ways. One, that the crimes existed and incidents occurred but they were not reported. The other could be that there is a spurt in occurrence of these events. Whichsoever the scenario, it is alarming. Another area of utmost importance while dealing with children he believed is safeguarding the rights and interests of children. There should be greater focus on rehabilitation and reintegration of children in society. As an establishment and an individual there is a need to encourage safeguarding of children in non-institutional care. De-institutionalisation of the environment he felt is important as well as even the juvenile houses are overcrowded. He felt a need to look out for more solutions in addition to the existing foster care, sponsorship and adoption programme. Another area to focus on is the justice for children. He acknowledged that children do not get adequate representation. They need the support of NGOs, civil society and the laws to uphold the principles as enshrined in the constitution. When it comes to rights of children, the executive, legislature, judiciary and media all should work together to provide justice.

Commenting on juveniles in conflict with law, he felt that they should be treated differently as children. He also discussed the issue of right to education of children. He said that he was informed that the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have not been given sufficient funds for the financial year 2018-19. On the issue of missing children and tracing their families, referring to the shelter home case in Muzaffarpur, he highlighted the trauma faced by children and stressed on the need for psychological care and rehabilitation centres and how they are important in bringing children to normalcy. Delay by Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) in disposing cases of children is another problem. Confirming to timelines, he believed was important under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 as children suffer due to inadequate representation and delay in justice.

Further, Hon’ble Justice Madan B. Lokur said that during the 13th Financial Commission, a huge amount of budget was allocated to construction of mediation centres in every district. This budget can be used to construct child friendly judicial system and courts. Such courts, where the victim cannot see the accused, can help the child give a fearless testimony. Such courts are required not only for children but also for women, who are victims of abuse.

Furthermore, he added that there was a need to look at other issues like funding, management, crime etc. before finalising schemes, policies and laws. Incomplete facts or missing facts he thought could create chaos within the establishment and during the implementation. On a concluding note, he mentioned that stakeholders need to convert thought into actions immediately for faster and better results.

OPEN FORUM:

Mr. Ranjan Chak, Member, Governing Board, Plan India thanked Justice Lokur for his highly encouraging words. He asked Hon’ble Justice Lokur a question on convergence, specifically, how a bridge can be built between the NGO sector and the government to deliver effectively on the ground.

Justice Lokur emphasised on the role of the Ministry of Women and Child Development which has sped up the pace of their programmes in recent times. He said most of the programmes are implemented by the state governments, therefore it is their responsibility as well as of the NGOs to work and deliver to the remotest areas. Furthermore, he added that all state officials could put together an action plan and bring in the change that is required. He spoke of the role of non-governmental actors and mentioned that the responsibility of children and their rights is not just on the three tiers of government, but it can take the shape of a CSR activity, and political will can play a pivotal role in advancing these rights as collective efforts would always yield better results. According to him, lack of data exists mainly due to understaffing in the surveyor companies and very limited funding. He stressed that the main problem exists in the effective implementation of laws, schemes or programmes.

The day long proceedings ended by thanking Hon’ble Justice Madan B. Lokur for taking the cause of the rights of the children to a different level and delivering many landmark and progressive judgments.
Day 2

Justice and Accountability for Children
PLENARY SESSION 4: JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY: ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

Prevention and Promotion through Legal Aid and Social Audit

Ms. Aparna Bhat – Amicus Curiae, Supreme Court of India, spoke about her role as an Amicus Curiae, working for children and dealing with children’s rights. Her work included ensuring legal support to children in difficult circumstances, the biggest problem being the issue of the entire constituency not being represented. She felt that the easiest way to support children in difficult circumstances is to ensure that they are under the care of institutions and care homes. However, according to her, the concerned stakeholders had failed to achieve this till now and there is an urgent need to find a non-institutional care programme that looks like a viable alternative for child protection. The law for consolidating issues revealed that a large number of children sheltered are in recognised and unrecognised homes, and other care and support institutions that have only been harmful to children. The minimum standards of care were hardly met and the movement of children from one place to another for education, work etc. was unregulated and unsafe. After many efforts from both State and Central Government, the only step up is that all the shelter homes are registered under JJ Act 2015. She pointed out that the law usually comes into being only after the abuse and violence is committed. The biggest challenge she perceived was finding a remedy to abuse and making sure that the perpetrator is brought to justice. She also discussed about supporting the child through the process of justice besides participating in criminal justice system where the child is only a witness in a criminal case and is protected and compensated. Resource management was another concern, Ms. Bhat spoke about the issue of mismanagement and allocation of resources. Due to the unscientific basis of allocation, issues such as duplicity, unplanned and unspent resources emerge. The whole process how interventions are made should be done after careful identification and allocation of resources. As every child does not have individual care plan in the shelter homes, it is hard to comprehend or measure the progress that the child has made. She recommended that ensuring individual plans for every child in difficult circumstances. As civil society, governments and as anybody else, she said that every professional has a responsibility towards protecting the rights of children.

Key Recommendations:
- The unrepresented and unheard voices of children, the difficulties and abuses faced by children in institutional or shelter homes, indicate to exploring non-institutional ways of care.
- Better and scientific allocation and management of funds to ensure that resources do not serve as a setback in ensuring the rights of the child

Instruments of Justice for Children

Ms. Maia Chochua, Deputy Team leader, EU4 Justice, spoke about ensuring proper implementation of the law. In her special address she spoke of the various instruments available at international level especially under the United Nations to advance justice for children. She discussed the 5 guiding principles, or 5 key pillars on which the ‘Compendium of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice’ is based:
- Persons in custody, non-custodial sanctions and application of restorative justice mechanism;
- Justice for children;
- Crime prevention, violence against women and victim issues;
- Good governance, independence of the judiciary, the integrity of criminal justice personnel and access to legal aid;
- Legal, institutional and practical arrangements for international cooperation.

She laid emphasis on creating a functional referral system between the state institutions to prevent crime, to provide social psychological rehabilitation services, as well as programmes to prevent crime and protect children with reluctant behaviours. She pressed for establishing strong inter-agency coordination and a management mechanism that results in the effective adoption of a comprehensive strategy accompanied with action plans, monitoring, reporting, and accountability. Referring to the pillars, she said that the United Nations adopted the guiding principles from the United Nations Secretary General’s notes which provides a framework for the United Nations to advance justice for children at the international level. Following are the guiding principles, which are also a part of United Nations mandate to support human rights and poverty eradication, the Millennium Development Goals and United Nations coherence agenda:
- Ensuring that the best interests of the child is given primary consideration;
- Guaranteeing fair and equal treatment of every child, free from all kinds of discrimination;
- Advancing the rights of the child to express his or her views freely, and to be heard;
- Protecting every child from abuse, exploitation and violence;
- Treating every child with dignity and compassion;
- Respecting legal guarantees and safeguards in all processes
- Preventing conflict with the law as a crucial element of any juvenile justice policy;
- Using deprivation of liberty of children only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;
- Mainstreaming children’s issues in all rule of law efforts.

Therefore, the United Nations approach to rule of law assistance requires the establishment and/or maintenance of institutions of justice, governance, security and human rights that are well-structured and financed, trained and equipped to make, promulgate, enforce and adjudicate the law in a manner that ensures the equal enjoyment of human rights for all. She also discussed about the number of documents adopted by various UN councils of the European Union to encourage restorative justice mechanisms in dealing with children, and the juvenile justice model adopted by the UN. She also laid emphasis on reintegration and rehabilitation approaches for child development, in an appropriate manner.

Key Recommendations:
- The standard laws and norms in crime prevention, criminal justice code of United Nations and key principles of Juvenile Justice to be strictly adopted by the government;
- The adaptation of techniques practiced in Georgia to decrease juvenile criminals by providing skill building training and psychological help, bringing down the chances of juveniles repeating the crime.

Policy and Institutional Mechanisms for Advancing Inclusion

Prof. Dr. Ashwini Deshpande, Professor, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, delivered the special address in which she elaborated on her research in the fields of gender and education, particularly the gender gap in education. The research explained the concept of the unwanted girl and son preference, and revealed important insights in the outcomes for a girl who was born to non-parents who did not want a girl child. She explained the difference between the upbringing given to boys and the unwanted girl child. She shared outcomes in the domains of education, health, labour market etc. where gender gap visibly exists not only in India or South Asia but everywhere else, typically in developing countries.

Prof. Dr. Deshpande focused on the kind of indicators that are used to identify gender gap on international as well as local platforms. According to her, a problem which is often overlooked while deciding the indicators, is the supply of services to girls or women. The existing imbalance in sex ratio in countries like India and China from 1970 to 2014, is something to be worried about. The research presented the case of missing women which not only includes girls who were not allowed to be born, but also women who died due to neglect or diseases. She communicated the reasons for son preference, some of the causes being a result of marriage patterns where older generation has the support of their son, others include dowry and religious rituals due to which girls are looked upon as burden to the family etc. Theoretically there is a difference, where many families want a son but if a girl is born, they do not discriminate and spend equal amount of money on both of their education, health etc. The research focused on the mentioned phenomena and considered parents having boys or girls or both. This year’s economic survey for the first time had a chapter on gender that focussed on son preference. The analysis estimated that 21 million unwanted girls are living in families with son preference. Families exhibit a fertility pattern which suggests that they continue to have children until they have a son. This trend can be identified if the gender of the last child is observed.

In addition, she spoke about structural transformation and progressive approach due to urbanisation and migration that has been marginally in favour of the girl child. The Indian media and organisations like Plan India, have played an
Girls Get Equal

important role in ensuring a safer environment for children, especially girls. She gave an example of countries like North Korea, China and South Korea, where state mandates and interventions have helped reverse the imbalance, whereas sometimes it has failed in doing so. One important change observed in South Korea led parents to realise that a daughter is equally capable of economically supporting her parents as a son would. Due to this realisation, the dependence on son to provide old age support diminished. Secondly in South Korea, provision of old age support depends on the proximity of the child to the parents, thus the perception that a boy is better able to support parents no longer holds true. Both these factors undercut the material basis of son preference.

From her research, she came to find that over the years, the quantity of education has increased for both boys and girls. However, the discrimination against girls can be seen through the quality of education, which is persistent and worsening. So most of this discrimination is practiced against unwanted girls followed by families which have preference, meta-preference for sons or pure son preference. On a concluding note, she reasoned that the labour force participation of women continues to decline. So in terms of economic value of adult women, if the labour force participation rate for women goes up; it is possible that parents will start realising the value of a daughter.

The Way Forward - Update on Youth Charter by Youth Advisory Panel Representatives:

Ms. Neha Siddique- President National Youth Advisory Panel

Mr. Dharam Pal- Member Youth Advisory Panel, Plan India:

The panelists, Ms. Siddiqui and Mr. Pal concluded the session by sharing a follow up to the Youth Charter which was first presented at the Plan for Every Child National Conference 2017. Plan India organised an inter-face dialogue between National Youth Advisory Panel (NYAP) members and duty bearers from different departments i.e. Department of Social Justice and Empowerment Government of NCT of Delhi, Delhi Legal Service Authority, State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Health Department, Women and Child Development, ICPS, National Commission for Women, and Special Police Unit, to share the Charter and obtain their response. The Charter was also presented during the International Day of the Girl (IDG) on 11th October 2018. The youth shared the Charter with 10 recommendations and had an intensive discussion on the eradication of gender stereotypes in the school curriculum and gender based violence at different spaces of society.

There was a positive response from the duty bearers and the youth were invited to conduct a gender audit of NCERT text books, visit the government offices to learn about the schemes and systems, and develop child friendly complaint procedures with the Delhi Police. Youth engaged in the gender audit workshop and visited the Juvenile Justice Board, Child Welfare Committee and District Child Protection Unit offices to interact with the officials on different schemes and systems.

Plan India also initiated an online survey with statements which aligned with the Youth Charter and engaged approximately 520 Youth in the survey. Ms. Neha Siddiqui, President NYAP and Mr. Dharam Pal, Member, NYAP presented the outcome of the survey. The statements were developed for scoring purposes, and they consisted information such as increase in girls’ enrolment in schools, awareness level on harassment, corporal punishment against girls, membership in clubs and groups, right to freedom of expression of girls in their family and at school, availability of female teachers in secondary school, WASH and menstrual hygiene facilities in school, inclusion of girls with disabilities in school, opportunities for girls to learn vocational skills, involvement of girls in sports, safer environment for girls, and gender equality in the family.

The survey consisted of 15 statements derived from the charter, and young individuals indicated their agreement with the statements on a 10 point scale, 1 being strongly disagree and 10 being strongly agree. The results presented here are disaggregated by male and female respondents with the percentage of respondents who indicated that the change is more than 5 on a scale of 1 to 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>M (%)</th>
<th>F (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrolment of girls in schools.</td>
<td>79.27%</td>
<td>83.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in awareness level among girls against eve teasing.</td>
<td>75.61%</td>
<td>80.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease of corporal punishment against girls.</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>66.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls are being members in children and youth clubs.</td>
<td>79.27%</td>
<td>82.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased opportunity for girls to express their views at family.</td>
<td>77.44%</td>
<td>80.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased opportunity for girls to express their views at schools.</td>
<td>81.10%</td>
<td>86.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in female teachers at secondary schools.</td>
<td>70.12%</td>
<td>75.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in WASH facilities at schools.</td>
<td>78.05%</td>
<td>80.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls are learning about Menstrual Hygiene and using safe menstrual practices</td>
<td>78.05%</td>
<td>89.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of girls with disability in the mainstream school.</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
<td>77.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased enrolment of young women in vocational training.</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
<td>77.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in extra-curricular activities in schools.</td>
<td>77.44%</td>
<td>80.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in girls taking participation in sports.</td>
<td>76.83%</td>
<td>82.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion has the safety of girls improved.</td>
<td>75.00%</td>
<td>78.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see in your families that girls and boys treated equally?</td>
<td>78.05%</td>
<td>82.42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They concluded the presentation by expressing future initiatives of youth engagement to create meaningful collaborations and contributions to the development of programmes, promote collective action of youth at the regional and national levels, youth networks and opportunity to have representation in decision making processes in governance.
PLENARY SESSION 5: “MAKE OUR WORLD SAFE”: WHO’S ACCOUNTABLE?

In solidarity with national and international efforts, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Plan India focuses on transforming the lives of vulnerable children, especially girls, so that they can learn, lead and thrive. Supporting target 16.2, which pledges to end violence against children by 2030, Plan India’s Sesame Workshop India (SWI), an educational organisation that uses the power of muppets and media, to conduct regional consultations with young children.

Plan India works to influence at all levels and in its process, partners with its most crucial stakeholders, children and youth. This year, with the goal to elucidate, amplify, and address children’s views of their own safety and protection, four regional consultations at Plan India’s partner locations in Bihar, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra were organised.

A part of the Plan for Every Child initiative, the engagement was designed in the form of one day consultations with children in the age group of 5 to 10 years from the community. The findings and recommendations of these regional consultations brought to Plan India’s Plan for Every Child 2018 National Conference in New Delhi, India.

Therefore, with the purpose to capture children’s perspective of safety, in November of 2018, state-level consultations with children between the ages of six- and ten years old in Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana were conducted. The thrust of the one day workshop with the children was on the following:

To amplify and included the voices of children in ongoing discussions on child protection, particularly within the context of the Plan for Every Child conference.

To open a dialogue about defining and creating safe spaces for children with key stakeholders at the national level.

To generate a set of clear action points and recommendations to be implemented at the local, State, and national level, based specifically on the feedback collected from children.

During each session, trained facilitators used specialised research techniques designed to provide young children with the space and language to discuss their specific safety concerns. These sessions were supplemented with focus groups with caregivers.

The results indicated that India children have constantly had serious concerns about safety in their homes, schools, neighbourhoods, and communities. The discussion generated a list of practical, immediate actions that various stakeholders can undertake in order to improve India’s existing child protection system. Detailed report of the state consultations is annexed.

In view thereof, the outcomes from the consultation were presented and discussed in a special session on Day 2 of the national conference. The session began by highlighting the most important voices of the day: the voices of children. Galli Galli Sim Sim Muppets Chamki and Elmo took the stage to introduce a group of boys and girls who participated in the consultations in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Children interacted with the Muppets on stage, introducing themselves and their ideas about safety. This not only provided context for the session, but was also a visual reminder of the urgency of the work to be undertaken that day. The session further had a panel discussion, which included:

- Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh, Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India;
- Dr. Amit Sen, Senior Child and Adolescent Psychologist, Director and Co-founder of Child First;
- Ms. Mamta Borgoyary, Chief Executive Officer of FXB India Suraksha;
- Ms. Rubita Gidwani, Creative Director Sesame Workshop, India;
- Ms. Era Joshi, Vice President- Education Research, Sesame Workshop India;
- Mr. Shamhbu, Editor of Balak Nama - a Children’s newspaper.

Ms Rubita Gidwani, Creative Director Sesame Workshop India, provided context for the plenary by giving a brief overview of why Plan India undertook the study and conference, and gave some background on the current state of child protection in India. Ms. Gidwani’s introduction was followed by a short video introducing the consultations and featuring some of the child and adult voices captured in the study. The movie was shot in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana and Maharashtra and featured voices of school children. It drew attention to the situation faced by more than 250 million children in India.

Ms. Era Joshi, Vice President- Education Research, Sesame Workshop India, presented the key outcomes from the regional consultations and informed the participants that they were able to come across many issues, which emerged during these consultations. She explained the importance of listening to the concerns of the children who comprise of 17% of India’s population, which may be useful while feeding into policies. The key objective of the state level consultations was to get children’s responses on various dimensions of child protection. Therefore, certain questions were raised like what is children’s idea of safe space? What are the child protection related concerns? Can parents play a significant role in improving the safety issues of children?

The findings that emerged said that majority of children felt unsafe from uncles, school principals, peon and people within the family. Traffic safety and railway tracks came out as a major concern of unsafe zones for the children. Many children had been either victims or witness of domestic violence in their respective homes. Schools also emerged as an unsafe zone mainly due to bullying by elder children and corporal punishments. The project also observed low self-esteem, lack of psychological warmth and unpleasantness at home in most of the children. In addition, she presented the statistical results that were clustered on state level and city level.

Concluding the findings of State consultations she said that there is a need to geographically divide unsafe locations and people to identify regions with higher number of crimes. Some of the cutting themes from corporal punishment, bullying and violence; some of the safety issues are also very culturally relevant for example, children from Bihar reported market as being unsafe zone for children as most of them fear getting kidnapped from the market. Similarly, domestic violence in the state of Telangana emerged as the highest of all states. Similar results reflected for substance abuse in Mumbai and alcoholism in Lucknow. At the end of her presentation, she requested everyone to come together on the critical issue of child protection and find a way to ensure safety and protection of children.

Dr. Amit Sen, Senior Child and Adolescent Psychologist and Co-founder of Child First, who has spent decades working with children and families, spoke about the numerous crises encountered by children and families affected by violence and abuse. To present a complete picture of the challenges India faces now, he described the journey of a hypothetical child ‘Mili’ who experienced emotional violence, illustrating how a lack of protection can cause children to experience low self-esteem and the development of self-destructive or anti-social behaviour. Throughout, Dr. Sen pointed out how adults missed warning signs due to a lack of awareness, and how the child had no way to access services. The story also served to highlight the inter-generational transfer of violence, something Dr. Sen believes can be broken with professional counselling. He pointed out the need to help children to feel strong, empowered and reassured. When the level of stress becomes severe and destructive, the situation becomes traumatic, then it begins to damage the structure of mind and disturbs the stability especially emotionally, which impacts the biological and physical levels. All of these affect the structure and function of the brain. It also makes children put less trust in others. In addition, depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) lead to various other disorders and emergence of an anti-social personality, which enhances the chances of crimes committed by them. This can be related to the number of cases filed under the Juvenile Justice Act and the POCSO.
Act. Dr. Sen feels India has a strong legislative framework, but a lack of implementation and awareness, both of which needs to be addressed from the local to the national level. Mr. Manoj Kumar, Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, provided an overview of the various laws that govern child safety, including the recently passed Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012, and the organisations working for child protection, such as the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), which the current government has streamlined in order to maximise the number of families placed with adoptive children. He also described the wide reach of the Aanganwadi system, and the Government’s ongoing effort to combine the MIS portals of different departments related to child protection in order to provide a holistic response to child development concerns.

Mr. Shambhu, Editor of Balak Namaa Children’s newspaper, words were especially powerful as he told participants that he himself was once an “at-risk” child who found his voice after writing for the children’s publication, Balaknama. Based on his personal experience and his reporting, he described the vulnerability of street children who fall outside due to systemic failures and vis-a-vis child protection network. In particular, he emphasised on children who ran away from home or ended up working in railway stations, places notorious for human trafficking. He pointed out that most young people believe that children’s homes and winter-shelters are provided only to children with families, so when they leave or are left by their parents, they are unaware of where to go or what to do. He also spoke about the need for more creches for parents who have no choice but to work, emphasising that when day labourers and other marginalised workers have infants or toddlers at home, older siblings are often forced to leave school and engage in caregiving. These older children, as well as street children, Mr. Shambhu said, must be sought out and pulled into school so that they have the tools to escape cycles of abuse. He concluded his address by saying that little attention is paid to child labourers, such as those children who sell products at traffic lights, and that this area in particular requires immediate interventions.

Mr. Shambhu said, must be sought out and pulled into school so that they have the tools to escape cycles of abuse. He concluded his address by saying that little attention is paid to child labourers, such as those children who sell products at traffic lights, and that this area in particular requires immediate intervention. He suggested that counselling can play a very crucial role in the lives of street children and those who run away from their homes. He further said that none of the parents are interested to send their children to work, neither the mothers want to leave home and go for work, if provided with better opportunities/avenues they too can live a better life and avail education, good food and other facilities/benefits.

Ms. Mamtam Borgoyari, Chief Executive Officer of FXB India Suraksha, work is focused on interventions. Consequently, she spoke about the ways in which local, State, and national interventions can be interwoven to best serve children and families. First and foremost, she felt that child protection should be made a national priority, something that should be reflected not only in legislation, but also in budget allocations to schools and Aanganwadis, particularly through ICDS. She felt that schools have the potential to be entry points in training educators, parents, and children on child protection. She was particularly optimistic about engaging School Management Committees (SMCs), which are school level committees consisting of parents, teachers, and at certain grade levels students who could work together to mobilise communities. She further discussed two things that are very serious and need immediate response. One is that various studies reflect that there is no change in trend. There are generations after generations that have accepted violence as part of life. The other is resilience among children to accept violence and develop a coping mechanism.

She recommended that panchayats should be more involved in child protection, and discouraged the heavy reliance on “resiliency programmes” that, she said, normalise violence instead of preventing it. She also recommended mandating menstrual and reproductive health classes for girls and boys, as well as providing communities with the opportunity to map safe and unsafe spaces in their areas using crowdsourcing technology.

Key recommendations:
- Reduce the level of stress among children;
- More security mechanisms towards child protection;
- There should be a counsellor office in schools, panchayats and parents should encourage children to visit it on a regular basis;
- Build education centres in slum areas and road side areas.

The session deliberated the approaches to planning for gender justice. The speakers focused on understanding what needs to change and the process required to achieve this change. The conversations and discussions related to the issue of gender discrimination is important to engage a wider population and create more awareness. The speakers concurred that the planning should utilise technology and social media as an asset. Women should receive respect and dignity, in order to achieve gender justice, which can be achieved by changing social norms and attitudes of men in the community or society, and including them in the dialogue to advance gender justice.
Children were asked to list down activities conducted by the boys and men that were intended to make boys understand the impact of their actions on girls who miss out on opportunities to work and study, as a feature that is unstated and accepted is the role boys play in household chores where actually the talk should be about sharing responsibility. According to her, language plays an important role as well, when we say heroes and protectors this is reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics. There is a need to talk to boys openly in an objective manner because behavioural change is a gradual process and not a one-time awareness intervention. A sustained interaction can generate some results over a period of time. Her suggestions focussed on creating an enabling environment and working with parents, community and all other stakeholders. On a concluding note, she said that it is important to plan for gender justice, working with men as a critical aspect to move forward with girls. Working with boys and men along with girls and women will deliver better outcomes. There is a need for evidence building about this. Women, the needs with men is a critical aspect to move forward with girls. Working with boys and men along with girls and women will deliver better outcomes. There is a need for evidence building, which will be achieved by sharing outcomes, conducting surveys etc. finally, she said that it is important to create platforms to build programmes together.

Ms. Dipakshi Mehandru Bhatia, Senior Advisor- Government Affairs and Public Policy, Dell, in collaboration with Government, NGOs, schools, academia etc. The project has a vision, that by 2030, our way of living will change and technology will play a vital role in it. The project called re-imaging 2030 works on the following four principles:

- Promote trust;
- Promote innovation;
- Promote sustainable development; and
- Promote workforce readiness.

She pointed out that the debate on traditional education; the gender divide in urban and rural schools is often missed out due to the massive debate on quality in urban and rural schools. To enable students to better comprehend gender equality, the focus should be on parents for social conditioning, and school administration because that’s where the first level discrimination begins, and finally, teachers to spot and prevent gender discrimination. Furthermore, she introduced five key learnings which emerged from ‘Edu vision’ which are as follows:

- Capacity building of not only students, but also teachers and parents is necessary. This is because many times parents may have biased attitudes, which can be seen when they prefer giving electronic devices to boys, the reason being two very distinct mind-sets, boys can use it properly and girls will misuse it;
- The e-content that is created and is available across Indian platforms, shows that as a country we are lagging behind in terms of alignment of skills. The observation was that most of that content is available for science and technology, engineering, mathematics etc. but there is no content available in the field of humanities. Also, majority of the content is available in English and Hindi, not in vernacular or regional languages;
- There has been a lot of development in the field of information and communications technology. Majority of the schools have computer labs, but the observation was that most of them did not have connectivity or power;
- There has been a lot of development and work from government in the field of research and innovation, and equal number of girls and boys participating in it. This initiative has been in place for the last 3 years, there is a need to reappli such initiatives and take them forward;
- Setting a benchmark for evaluation monitoring assessment. A right base is necessary to measure the progress. There is a need to redefine the learning technique and the way we monitor learning not only for students but also for teachers.

Ms. Mehandru Bhatia concluded by saying that over the next few years, we have to raise the right questions and work with the ecosystem to find the right answers.

Ms. Natasha Rathi, Independent Filmmaker, spoke about the power of the entertainment industry. She started with apologising on behalf of the industry that creates content, which has perpetuating a gender gap that has reinforced stereotype over time. There has been a need to use this medium that has the potential to bring about social change as well. Unfortunately India is a country where change is an individual responsibility and even the government has realised that the only way to reach the Indian mind-set through a faster deep-seated change and through social sentimental emotions is a people’s movement for change. In order to plan for gender justice, media and communication plays a very crucial role nowadays. She explained the Bechdel test, which is utilised to measure the representation of women in the films. The test checks if the hero in the film is an important woman, if she talks to another woman, and if there is a female character in a film, who talk to each other, on a topic other than men. Most of Indian cinema movies failed this test; even the women centric Bollywood movies failed this test. She explained the term used by, academy award winner Frances McDormand, inclusion rider, which means hiring more women, more people from LGBT community and special castes, more people with special needs and minorities, by negotiating and stipulating it as riders in their contract. The actors can bring about the contractual and structural change because in India people worship these stars. There is a need for them to adopt and propagate this as they could have the power to create a shift in the Indian mind-set and change the way the industry functions. This could only be a cosmetic fix to the problem but it can help in accepting the change. According to her, inclusion doesn’t initiate with legislation but, in the film industry specifically, they to understand that the audience is growing and demanding inclusion and representation of diversity. She pointed out that the issue of gender is too deep and needs to be addressed at the grassroots.

Furthermore, she spoke about the NGO Sakshi, of which she is a member. The organisation has opened up the conversation of gender justice in India which has been associated with Vishakha guidelines and subsequently with laws on sexual harassment at workplace. They have recently
launched the program called production project, which is going to be implemented across India. The objective of this project is to strengthen all the districts with respect to an existing powerful constitution by focusing on building awareness on POCSO. On a concluding note, she emphasised that planning for gender justice requires deconstructing the origin and presence of existing policies as well as deep dive to the impact it has in our personal space. This can create a movement that could be unstoppable unless the communication connects with multitudes of the entire generation who are seeking just an equal word with it that will make a difference and bring about the change that is required.

Mr. Timothy Opobo, Child Protection and Advocacy Manager, Child Fund International, Uganda, shared his perspectives and experiences working towards advancing child rights, over the one and a half day of attending the conference, he realised that the issues that Indian children face are different from the concerns of children in Africa. He suggested that this national conference provided an opportunity to learn and utilise the content to improve the life of children across nations. Talking about planning for gender justice, he emphasised on research and evidence building and a community based approach. The issue of gender justice comes from norms, culture, religious practices, which boosts a certain kind of attitude or inherent mindset that is taught since early childhood. Therefore, understanding these inherent beliefs and traditional community mechanism that exists from the perspective of the community known as ethnography approach in terms of planning should be the starting point. Ethnographic approach means understanding the concept from the community perspective and not from a practitioner or developer perspective. Before initiating the process of planning, there is a need to understand the depth of social injustice or gender justice that prevails in a certain community or region. The community system or something prevalent within the community are the foundation of the broader child protection system. Anything that happened to the children, community is the first line of protection, prevention and therefore first line of response. Globally, many countries have a dual system, where the informal system works towards community systems, community justice or injustice and within community structure, and the formal system works within laws and have mandatory obligations.

Furthermore, explaining the importance of community based approach he gave an example where the law and community understanding was different. He shared his experience when he went to a community to stop child marriage, he found out for that particular community a girl child is someone who hasn’t developed breasts irrespective of age. In this community girl child is not someone younger than 18 years. So while going to a community understanding how the community functions, which concepts do they follow and why is important while talking about injustice and what is injustice in the community. To deep-dive into understanding things from community prospective and understanding social norms of the community should be the objective. Another important aspect is to comprehend a channel of communication to deliver the message of gender transformation, and recognise the allies from within the community who can help bring the change. One thing that he observed in many countries he visited was that there are laws and policies but they are not properly enforced or implemented, the reason being contradictory views, attitude and perception of the communities. On a concluding note, he said that there is a need to link the formal and informal system together while addressing the issue of social injustice or gender justice. He pointed the following challenges that could come in taking the community-based approach are as follows:

- Preconceived views and solutions in the mind-sets of developers and practitioners.
- There is too much focus on the issue as opposed to the broader system where it is to be implemented.

Ms. Charu Anand, Senior Program Manager (North), Plan India, discussed gender justice at work from her experience in working with Plan India on a project called “Samanta” implemented in Ambedkar nagar, Uttar Pradesh supported by UN and implementing partner Paani. The key focus of the project was to look at gender disparity in wages and discriminatory factors. There is discrimination that women face in workplace like delayed payments, lesser payments, non-monetary payments etc. There is less dignity and respect for women especially in the workplace. Exploitative in difficult working conditions, derogatory behaviour of the employers is another challenge. Employers give petty tasks to women, which are unrelated to the kind of work they are employed for.

Women have started to underestimate themselves due to the low pay and unacceptable behaviour of the employers. There is general acceptance of unfairness in the areas where we are dealing. The first agenda was to make them realise the obligations that the employer has towards them under the equal remuneration Act, 1976. The second agenda was to look as per the constitution, under the human rights framework, whether they were equal. The important thing to note here is that the employers play a very critical role in making this change and so their inclusion in these of discussions is a must. The benefits of practising these things are that women get little financial independence.

Key Recommendations:

- Understand what needs to be changed, who needs to be a part of the planning process and whether to include the youth in the process of planning;
- The most important aspect of gender justice to begin the conversations and discussion, to engage the wider population to create awareness about the issue of gender discrimination;
- Change the way the boys are being raised differently from girls. This will make girls and boys equal since childhood;
- Understand the depth and the root of the issue before making the plan to resolve the issue;
- Recognise the systems followed within the communities and consider these in the development of policies and programmes.

THEME 6: DELIVERING FOR GENDER JUSTICE

Chair

Ms. Geetanjali Goel, Additional District Sessions Judge and Special Secretary, Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DALSA)

Panellists

- Dr. Bharti Sharma, Former Member, Child Welfare Committee, Delhi
- Ms. Sohini Bhattacharya, President and CEO, Breakthrough
- Dr. Trupti J. Panchal, Assistant Professor and Head of Gender Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences

The session focused on issues occurring during implementation. There are no dearth of laws, however, effective implementation of laws is the major challenge to achieve gender justice. The speakers highlighted the various existing schemes, policies and programmes focussed for the attainability of Sustainable Development Goals.
The Chair, Ms. Geetanjli Goel, Additional District Sessions Judge and Special Secretary, Delhi State Legal Services Authority, while introducing the theme for the panel discussion emphasised that gender justice can have various connotations. She expressed the need for better systems to deliver gender justice in order to ensure a gender neutral society. She mentioned about the need to strengthen existing strategies, policies and schemes for their better implementation. With this, she invited the speakers to present their viewpoint on delivering gender justice.

Dr. Bharti Sharma, Former Member, Child Welfare Committee, Delhi, spoke about the need to understand gender inequality and injustice. She felt even after the judgement to repeal section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, gender largely remains confined. Acceptance to persons with a different gender identity is still lacking. Although the honourable Supreme Court has just de-criminalised different sexual orientations, however, a lot of work still needs to be done at the grassroots level by organisations working with children. She thought it was necessary to talk to children who felt differently, particularly in their puberty when they start experiencing hormonal changes. Children carry a lot of burden when they are undergoing hormonal changes, especially when their siblings or friends are not. She strongly advocated for a change in the patriarchal mindset that still existed in the society which she thought was the root cause of issues pertaining to gender and needs to be changed in order to achieve gender justice.

Furthermore, she discussed the role and importance of the childcare and protection agencies responsible for the rescue, restoration, rehabilitation and reintegration of street children. In addition, she pointed out that while addressing children, there is always discussion about protection of girls and boys. Children with different sexual orientation are never addressed. She also spoke about proper implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) and their adequate budgeting.

Ms. Sohini Bhattacharya, President and CEO, Breakthrough, narrated how girls are treated in India. She narrated her own experience of knowing families who do not want girls born to them. She gave example of districts where girls are given names like ‘Bharpet’ and ‘Artem’ meaning ‘enough’ and ‘end’. She iterated that families were discriminating boys and girls in terms of providing facilities. She also spoke about the need to sensitise boys so that they can recognise the prevailing patriarchal mind-set and act against this.

She felt discriminatory social norms and practices have encouraged the patriarchal mind-set. She further recommended working with children’s issues by classifying them into different age groups as they face different challenges at different ages. She felt the first thing to deal with is recognising adolescence, second is the mind-set on gender equality norms that promote equality. In addition, she pointed out that regardless of the magnitude of reforms and laws that exist, till the time it doesn’t reach out to young girls and women, the discrimination will prevail. There is a need for more formal and informal system of redressal to combat gender inequality. There is a need to create safer spaces at home in communities and schools along with child protection systems. She gave an example of a programme called ‘Family’ that was launched in various schools of Haryana. The programme curriculum was so effective that there was a significant gender based attitude and behaviour change among both girls and boys. Changes were more in case of boys as girls generally were more gender sensitive. It was also identified that change in the behaviour of boys sanctioned better ties with the family than compared to girls. She shared that a gender sensitive curriculum was already adopted by over 842 schools in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana. There is also a need for collected convergence between legislative, executive and judiciary. There is a need to plan the working of different institutions together with a common goal. Lastly, she said there is a need for sensitive handling and timely responses from the system. She recommended that every judicial reform should be made available even at the lowest level in gram panchayats.

Dr. Trupti Panchal, Assistant Professor and Head of Gender Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, shared her experiences especially in the subject of domestic violence. While highlighting the effect that domestic violence has on children, she specifically referred to violence against children and gender based violence. She emphasised that understanding the perspective of children while working for child rights is very important. Quoting Haryana, she spoke of the convergence between the different departments that has helped the state to achieve success on child marriage, which is not seen in other parts of the country. Convergence, she thought was important as things would not improve without all stakeholders working together. If mothers are empowered, then somehow children would also benefit. She said that it was not just the impact that concerned her but also the issue of available mechanisms to facilitate this. Speaking about POCSO, she said that a number of children were booked under the law because of consensual relationships turning into complaints, mostly by parents. This according to her was a grave concern that needed attention.

Key Recommendations:
- Patriarchal mind-set needs to change in order to achieve gender justice. Other genders need to be part of the dialogue to achieve gender justice;
- The concerns of the boy child should also be addressed as they also come under the vulnerable section of the society;
- Agency of the child needs to be capacitated to ensure the child’s rehabilitation and reintegration into the society;
- Acknowledging that home might not be the safest place for children and safer environment should be provided;
- Grouping of children as per different age groups as children belong to a certain age group like 5-10 years, 10-15 years and so on. This is because the needs of different age groups are different.

In addition, she pointed out that while addressing children, there is always discussion about protection of girls and boys. Children with different sexual orientation are never addressed. She also spoke about proper implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) and Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) and their adequate budgeting.

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Mr. Edward Duffus, Head of Innovation, Plan International, spoke about utilising technology, particularly digital technology to resolving issues. He was of the opinion that digital technology was a powerful tool which if used responsibly could greatly benefit society. However, one needed to be vigilant of the potential risks and pitfalls. He mentioned that it was an effective tool to amplify the intended impact. At the same time, it could also aggravate unintended consequences. According to him, technology can be effectively used as a tool to enable the rights of the children. Speaking of an ongoing project of Plan International in Columbia, he said that digital technology such as social media facilitated a platform where girls could voice their opinions and demand their rights. In addition, girls using private social media groups on shared mobile phones could potentially antagonise other members of the family. Social media also made it easier for sexual predators to reach girls. He iterated that technology is an enabler and amplifier of child rights and it’s usage as a protective mechanism against unintended consequences is immense. He cited that several registration systems around the world are failing and many births go unreported. Therefore, their identity remains hidden and so does their protection. He said if registration of such children is done then their safety could be ensured and all this is possible with the use of technology.

On his part, he shared that he intended to create a digital solution for civil registration so that rights are enabled and not denied due to lack of technology.

Dr. Ish Kumar, Former Director, National Crime Records Bureau, started by focusing on the data provided by the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) and described the government agency as the only authentic source of information on crime and criminals data in the country. He stated that the total number of crimes recorded every year was around 5 million, out of which, the total crime against children was close to 0.10 million. Under the IT Act, 2000 the total cyber-crime cases registered was around 4000 and within these, the reported cases data for cyber-crime against children is unavailable. Whereas, if child pornographic material is taken into consideration, only 47 cases were recorded in the country in the year 2016. He emphasised on the possibility to work on issues like cyber harassment, bullying, online suicides etc. He informed that the Government data will be made available from next year onwards and that the Ministry of Home Affairs had already come out with a cyber-crime reporting portal in which complaints could be lodged. Subject to the case being cognizable, the concerned police is supposed to register and investigate and if not possible then write to service providers of the concerned social networking sites to remove the objectionable content. An initiative called National Data of Sexual Offenders (NDSO) is taken by the Ministry and by doing so India became the 11th country in the world which undertook such an initiative. Under this, maintenance of database was started. Surveillance over sexual offenders could be maintained but that database is still not available with the public. Moreover, 94% of police stations have online connectivity to display data. He provided information about the usage of Automated Facial Recognition System for identifying the missing children and identifying those children who are found but find it hard to speak about their parents’ whereabouts. He concluded his presentation by showing concern over the lack of proper infrastructure, in particular paucity of cyber forensic labs and no Centre of Excellence, even at the Government level, who collate data on all cyber issues and initiate investigations.

Dr. Malvika Tyagi, Assistant Professor, NALSAR University of Law, started her address by stating that the proliferation of mobile phones is unprecedented in the last few years in India. One of the major areas of concern nowadays is that children have access to almost anything that they want. This however provides preventive criminal avenues to perpetrators of crime where they indulge in activities like filming videos, recording inappropriate/illegal activities and uploading them on the internet. A team of forensic experts who can work exclusively on child abuse can be a possible solution in addressing these issues and can help track sources of cyber-crimes, and thus track the perpetrators.

She stated that children were not only victims in the conventional sense but also in the sense that they are victimised about being potential criminals themselves.” Sharing her experience of working with children of Juvenile Observation Home in Delhi, she spoke of a 14 year old boy who confessed to kidnapping and murdering a 6 year old child for the simple reason that he wanted to have an iPhone 6 but couldn’t afford it.

She concluded her address by quoting a report by The World Bank, according to which children in India today will only be 44% as productive as they could have been had they obtained access to health, education and other support from family.

Dr. Merle Tan, Head, Medical Division, Child Protection Unit, Philippine General Hospital, spoke about the role of technology and whether it acts as an enabler or disabler. She mentioned that digital technology has helped in increasing access to information, increasing skills in the digital
workplace and facilitating platforms to connect and communicate. Talking about the initial results of the pilot study conducted in Philippines, titled ‘Global Kids Online National Survey’, she mentioned that less than a third of the children reported being upset by something happening online. 32% children shared that they have seen sexual images on the internet and have come across online material that has upset them. These behavioural changes in children and reasons behind these changes were worrying. She further added that a child’s brain suffers heavy damage if he faces neglected, stress or trauma of any kind. In Philippines, online child abuse takes place in the form of cyber bullying, exposure to sexually explicit material, sexting, online grooming, cyber enticements, sexual solicitation and sexual abuse, mostly through social media.

To tackle these serious issues, she felt that there is a strong need of collaboration among various stakeholders such as the government, NGOs, private sector, academicians, medical fraternity, friends, family etc. since every stakeholder is important in this pursuit.

Mr. Mohammed Asif, Director - Programme Implementation, Plan India shared his experiences of working on the project ‘Missing Child Alert (MCA)’ that Plan India had implemented. It was a cross border trafficking prevention programme where technology was a central element for cross border trafficking. The project focused on trafficking which takes place between India, Bangladesh and Nepal. There are a number of processes that the project looks into, beginning from the identification of the child who is rescued to her or his repatriation.

He shared that the objective of this study was to map out processes and test whether technology can become an enabler in this very complicated process. He further added that the Repatriation Information Management System of Plan India managed records of persons, especially for legal duty bearers so that the repatriation process for the survivors is processed faster. Of the 278 live cases that Plan dealt with, many have been repatriated and few are still in the pipeline to be repatriated back to Bangladesh and Nepal.

One of the key advantages of the MCA system is that, considering many instances of re-trafficking from Nepal and Bangladesh, the data and information about the person when they were trafficked can be immediately traced. He concluded his remarks by highlighting the efficiency of the enabled systems that are currently used to tackle the problem of cross border child trafficking and thereby ensuring safe repatriation of survivors.

Ms. Shelley Thakral, Head of Policy Programmes, India, South Asia, and Central Asia, Facebook, started her remarks by expressing concern about the behaviour and usage of smartphones and computers among children at an increasingly young age. She indicated that the community and parents need to act more responsibly when it comes to digital profficiency of young children. She added that Facebook shares a strong relationship with UNICEF, with the government and with various other institutions in order to be adapt and adopt their strategies around policies, resources, tools and communities. She further added that Facebook tries to ensure that rights of the young people to access platforms and express themselves are upheld by providing access to freedom of information. With regard to this though, security and the right to privacy control are issues that are taken care of by Facebook, and the organisation has zero tolerance to images that are indicative of children’s exploitation and also to any kind of material that promotes hate. There is also a newsroom Facebook page which all the information is maintained chronologically and in detail. Facebook also has safety centres and parental portal guidelines to raise considerable information.

Capt. Vineet Kumar, Founder, Cyber Peace Foundation, shared his experience of working in a programme called ‘Digital Shakti’ through his foundation, where they sensitised young girls about online safety and also helped them become digitally literate. They focus on innovation by conducting hackathons to come up with solutions for majority of the cyberspace problems. He further spoke about collaboration among the academia, civil society, industry and the government where a platform, standard material and resources are created that can be circulated to the public. He hailed technology as an enabler citing that in today’s day and age, it cannot be ignored. He quoted statistics that show around 35% of the Indian population connected to the internet by 2020, this is expected to become a game changer as around 1 billion internet connected users are expected to be from India. He stressed that cyberspace is a hard control space with its own set of challenges including child abuse. He suggested that increased research, multi-stakeholder interactions and use of vernacular language to teach people are some of the ways to deal with the challenges associated with cyberspace.

He suggested that cyber law needs to be vibrant in nature as technology is dynamic. He further added that a cyber law enacted 15 years ago would not work in the current scenario to track the perpetrators. He concluded his remarks by sharing that children are the future and the right use of technology can give them a bright and better future.

Mr. Priyank Kanoongo, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Government of India, said that the crucial role and responsibility of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) as an institution, is to safeguard the rights of children. He introduced ‘Being Safe Online’, an initiative of the NCPCR - to raise awareness among children, parents, educators and the general public. He further spoke about a push button complaint registration system on the NCPCR’s website called POCSO e-Box. Through this website, children can register their complaints by pushing a button in just three steps. He said that the first complaint which was lodged into POCSO e-Box came from a village in the district of Hisar, Haryana, which shows that technology has started to positively influence rural schools. Quoting an NDTV report, that highlighted 53,000 cases of cyber security being registered in 2017, he substantiated the role of technology.

Furthermore, he spoke of a recent initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs under which a booklet was launched on cyber safety for school going children. He said that for the first time ‘Kumbh Mela’ at Ujjain in 2016 was declared child friendly and that was only possible because of the effective use of technology which enabled authorities to make it safe and friendly zone for children. He emphasised on the need for an online training program for all the relevant stakeholders involved in Juvenile Justice System. Quoting a personal anecdotes, he said that it is a difficult task to convince people to get educated or to try and learn new things. However, with the help of technology, one can mitigate these challenges. He also suggested developing a software on child rights which would act as an enabler for children in difficult circumstances. He concluded his remarks by sharing that there were sufficient laws in existence, however the need of the hour is to increase public awareness about these laws and their effective implementation.

The Chair, Prof. Dr. S. Parasuraman, Member, Governing Board, Plan India, concluded the panel session by thanking all the speakers and applauding Plan India for its commitment towards the work on child rights. He mentioned that today children have exposure to a range of social media channels in the sense that they are constantly glued to their phones, internet or television. He was concerned about children’s unrestricted access to mobile phone usage, especially the internet, which leaves them vulnerable to cyber abuse and increases cybercrime. He felt that there was a need to be more cautious and referring to what Mr. Priyank Kanoongo, Chairperson, NCPCR, said about the phone sim card which if a child uses should be registered in the name of the child to prevent misuse. He summed up his remarks by stating that although children have the right to access social media but at the same time it’s also very important to identify ways whereby a child can be protected from negative consequences. He appealed to all the stakeholders to come out with solutions in the form of policies and programmes that mitigate the risk and safeguard children. He also stated that judiciary has an important role to play in dealing with such issues.

Key recommendations:

• Data from the police stations can be used in identifying and locating hubs of organised or unorganised crimes;
• Strong regulations should be exercised for technology service providers in order to reduce cyber-crimes;
• Internet de-addiction centres needs to be established across the country;
• Capacity building trainings and exposure needs to be provided to agencies dealing with cybercrimes.
Day 3
Response Towards
A Just Future
PLENARY SESSION 8: MOVING THE NEEDLE:
MEASURING GENDER TRANSFORMATION

Chair
Mr. J. V. R. Prasada Rao, Secretary, Governing Board, Plan India

Panellists
- Dr. Namrata Jaitli, Deputy Director - Policy and Programme Impact, Save the Children India
- Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande, Project Anchor, SAHAJ
- Prof. William Joe, Assistant Professor, Institute of Economic Growth
- Ms. Ranjana Saradhi, Director - Client Solutions, Nielsen Private Limited (India)
- Dr. Renu Singh, Country Director, Young Lives India
- Mr. Sabyasachi Das, Head of Business Development, Dure Technologies
- Mr. Sandeep Ghosh, Senior Vice President, Karvy Insights Limited
- Mr. Pradeep Narayanan, Director, Programme Strategy and Policy, Plan India

The chair, Mr. J. V. R. Prasada Rao, Secretary, Governing Board, Plan India, started the discussion by highlighting relevant concerns like identifying existing systems, that are able to advance gender transformation and help in changing the representation of gender roles over a period of time. Lastly, he spoke about the need for consolidated efforts by the government, research institutions, and private sector to measure impact by building evidence for influencing. Indicating a need for credible data, he highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation systems and also urged stakeholders to set up a comprehensive framework with well-defined indicators that help in measuring progress on gender and social issues. He concluded his note by highlighting that the most crucial component in Safe the Children’s institutional framework is safer gender equality (meaning absence of gender discrimination on the basis of sex and gender, which needs organisational support).

The institutional framework had formulated and accepted policies, that could be used while deciding programmes, undertaking policy interventions, shaping partnerships and creating policy frameworks. She exclaimed that it was important to have gender equality and transformation at the right places across all interventions. The key approaches that the institutional framework follows are gender sensitive approach and gender transformative approach. Dr. Jaitli remarked that the difference between the two frequently mistaken approaches is that gender sensitive approach is designed in a manner that it differentiates needs, abilities and opportunities for boys and girls, men and women. On the contrary, the gender transformative approach utilises the gender sensitive approach, understands the differential needs and finally comprehends the root causes of gender discrimination. Indicating the importance of designing such an approach to measure gender equality, and highlighting the drawbacks of a gender blind design, Dr. Jaitli reiterated that no matter what tools are used, if the design suffers from this drawback, the measurement of gender equality would not be possible. She recommended scanning all the programmes through a gender lens.

Moreover, she emphasised on developing a gender transformative monitoring and evaluation system and suggested that such a system should focus on the following components, to ensure gender transformative programmes:

- When designing results statements, one of the outcomes should refer to gender equality because once it is defined as an outcome, measurable indicators on gender equality are subsequently formulated;
- Include a gender-measuring indicator amongst other indicators in order to include gender equality as a part of the outcomes of any programme or scheme;
- Have both qualitative and quantitative indicators to observe the difference the programmes have at addressing the needs of boys and girls;
- Collect and connect the disaggregated data;
- Collect information using a gender perspective, to see if the inputs and needs of boys and girls are being taken into consideration properly while collecting data.

On a concluding note, she said that in order to develop comprehensive solutions having the right design, tools and analysis framework is very important.

Dr. Nilangi Sardeshpande, Project Anchor, SAHAJ, spoke about gender transformative evaluations highlighting power relations. Dr. Sardeshpande mentioned that gender and other social relations of class, sexuality, caste, abilities, religion etc. define the exercise of power. The manner in which power inequities unfold within communities, families and institutions indicate gender transformation. According to her, gender transformative evaluation comes from equity, rights and gender components combined together. Another important feature is the inclusion of women’s voices in the evaluation design which can be identified through qualitative research and by talking to women at the family level. Abuse and violence against women may be revealed only by using qualitative methods. A third important part of gender transformation is to disseminate the evaluation reports to the participants and beneficiaries so it becomes a mutually enhancing process of learning.

Furthermore, she introduced an index developed by SDGs Equal Measures 2030, which was constituted in 2016. Nine organisations, including Plan International are involved in the index. These organisations have realised that unless specific gender equality steps are not taken under the SDGs framework, things by itself will not automatically become gender equal. Currently, in the pilot phase the index is applied in 6 countries that include Colombia, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Kenya and Senegal. In discussing the availability of gender data, a survey was conducted wherein policy makers and gender advocates expressed inadequacy in gender data and indicators that could be utilised to hold governing institutions accountable towards gender transformation. She shared that out of the many indicators that the United Nations has developed to measure progress of SDGs, very few indicators pertain to gender, and within that fewer have data available on progress towards gender equality within this framework.

Dr. Sardeshpande spoke about the use of gender indicators besides monitoring and evaluation. For instance, for poverty there are laws on women access to land use, control and ownership. For hunger, there are laws about obesity, anaemia, food security and improved nutrition for women. For healthy birth and mortality rates, there is access to modern methods of family planning. She mentioned that challenges include disaggregated data and authenticity of data and gave an example of misreported data on adolescent pregnancies, when respondents do not directly share the age of an adolescent, claiming the age to be over 16, and this
is not verified with official documentation.

She concluded by saying that right data in the right hands can transform societies and this was essential to build a system where the government makes gender transformation its philosophy and aggregates data to prompt action on the issue.

Prof. William Joe, Assistant Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, shared his perspectives on data science and gender equality. Indicating that the impact, in terms of quantifiable indicators, is shifting from equity to equality, he spoke of a pivotal challenge, that quantitative research often regards equity from an equality perspective. There may be instances where a particular small group of individuals experience a problem, which may not be captured in the aggregate framework or aggregate data, and the underlying process of gender inequality could disappear from the data. This makes the task of interpreting the data correctly or accurately very difficult. He mentioned that the authenticity and verification of data is another challenge while dealing with large data sets. There are two important aspects to appreciate this measurement; one is that the outcome is influenced by a range of determinants which are often not captured or may not be very successful but the outcome may differ. According to him, there is another challenge, which is to find the right indicators to measure SDG goals, and the need for indicators to go beyond the outcome but on the process itself. Professor Joe indicated the need to increase accountability in the system, one in which audiences can discuss and highlight problems. He suggested district or community level comparisons of various gender based data sets and recommended that indicators may be measured at the parliamentary constituency level to engage political representatives in order to improve outcomes for a particular region. He highlighted on the need for better communication of the process and outcomes especially in gram panchayats, assembly constituencies, parliamentary constituencies etc. Lastly, he expressed a need for effective monitoring and discussed the process and the outcome to monitor progress in achieving the targets.

Ms. Ranjana Saradhi, Director - Client Solutions, Nielson Private Limited (India), started her note by quoting Wu Hongbu, former Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, who said “Complete framework is of course not the end of the story, on the contrary it is the beginning.” Drawing inference from the quote, Ms. Ranjana felt that more specifications were needed for gender transformation. From working in coordination with multiple stakeholders and organisations on gender related issues, she shared relevant learnings citing that there are 300 indicators to measure gender equality across the globe. Having more indicators makes the task of implementers, policy makers, planners and data analysts more difficult. She appreciated the efforts of organisations in the development of gender related indices. She opined that the implementers analysing the indicators haven’t observed the needle move by much. She insisted on the need for programmes or initiatives to look at the underlying social norms, attitudes and social systems. She indicated that domains where these social norms and attitudes can be observed, include the individual as well as collective units such as the family, observing dynamics of household and community. She recommended looking into the childhood experiences and collecting retrospective data on violence, trauma, and children witnessing gender based violence, as these are the things that influence gender equity that a person may have.

She also spoke about the study done in collaboration with International Centre of Research for Women (ICRW). The study took into account change in attitudes of both men and women, childhood experiences, including the retrospective data on experiences of violence, bullying, boys, trauma and gender based violence. The study found that all these indicators influence the kind of gender equity that an individual consists of. Lastly, Ms. Saradhi presented her recommendations, which are as follows:

- Conduct more studies to identify gender dynamics, which are culture and country specific at the micro level;
- Adapt and apply international scales to study attitudes;
- Identify the most important indicators which provide direction on transformative change;
- Advocate inclusion of these indicators in studies for NGOs at national level;
- Additionally, she shared the following suggestions:
  - Data should be collected at the ground level preferably by the implementer;
  - Identification of important indicators, which provide direction on transformative change, not necessarily adopted at the international level.

Dr. Renu Singh, Country Director, Young Lives India, shared about the need to look beyond gender equality and into empowerment, which is a more powerful concept and addresses the underlying power dynamics. She conveyed that transformative change can be measured through three broad domains, namely agency, relationship and structure. She explained this citing the example of Young Lives’ longitudinal study carried out across Ethiopia, Peru, Vietnam and India since 2002, and the 5th round which was completed in 2016. The study started with children who were much younger and are now in their adolescent years. By observing two cohorts with a pro-poor sampling strategy, they tried to understand how the mode of change on the ground and for individuals, through a life course perspective which could capture gender transformation and which was not possible through a cross-sectional analysis. She shared an important finding that shows India as the only country to show gender inequality in terms of school enrolment. Ethiopia, on the other hand shows a pro-girl bias in enrolment. Given that there are two cohorts, a cross-cohort comparison was conducted, and the study divulged that compared to the older cohort, the younger cohort displayed an improvement in enrolment rates between ages 8 & 15. Dr. Singh indicated that social norms, especially child marriage are responsible for a decline in enrolment rates. She mentioned that making younger children understand to continue studies was easier as compared to older children. One of the key reasons for this was child marriages and early marriage of women. She raised the question on whether we counted what really matters?. She recommended differentiating between programmes using gender transformative approaches and programmes using conventional gender accommodative approaches.

Furthermore, she discussed a 12 indicator scale called the Attitude towards Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA), a key finding for this scale was observed to measure changes in gender attitudes for boys and girls. She shared that one of the key findings was that at 19 years of age, girls displayed more egalitarian attitude than boys. She concluded by emphasising on the importance of longitudinal, ethnographic and qualitative data. She recommended that the gender transformative programmes should ideally focus on both young people and parents to make a distinction for monitoring, learning and then evaluation.

Mr. Sabyasachi Das, Head of Business Development, Dure Technologies, spoke about the gender gap that exists. He started by discussing an objective of Dure Technologies, which was to gather data that could be used for gender or social transformation. The organisation started working with communities for UNAIDS in the HIV states where the key populations are sex workers, people who inject drugs etc. Stigma, discrimination, violence, access to healthcare services etc. were identified as key issues faced by commercial sex workers. He also explained about the process to analyze data or indicators derived from logical frameworks and specifically address those project outcomes. He identified comparability within and across organisations which face issues of aggregation. He mentioned that quantitative data has the advantage that it can be aggregated and tracked longitudinally but organisations are generally left with standardised indicators which are being used. He emphasised that the fundamental question remains, who determines the success of the project and defines this change, making the process top-down. He then shared that time usually was limited to end up...
consulting the constituency for which the project was implemented. According to Mr. Ghosh, qualitative research is very important to identify the appropriate indicators. However, he felt that the problem with qualitative data to dictate the change is that there is no appropriate method since each community has different standards of empowerment. He felt that if the collected data was mapped back to at least four or five key sustainable goals then there would be some sort of comparability irrespective of it being qualitative or quantitative data.

In his conclusion, he emphasised that the manner in which the data is collected did matter as long as the indicators were ratified on the ground by the primary beneficiaries themselves. He felt that at the time of formulating project objectives, there should be an effort to map those objectives into the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that projects implemented by NGO’s across India are comparable at a broad aggregated level. He believed this was an effective way to create an alternate database and reduce dependency on other databases.

Mr. Pradeep Narayanan, Director, Programme Strategy and Policy, Plan India, spoke about Plan International’s study on Safer Cities, titled ‘Unsafe in the City’, across five cities (Madrid, Lima, Sydney, Kampala and Delhi). The objective was to find out the perceptions of safety, and unearth what girls and women experience while moving around in the city. The study was conducted by Plan International in partnership with Monash University’s XYX Lab and the Australian mapping agency, Crowdspot. The method adopted by the research was through a crowd-mapping social survey tool titled ‘Free to Be’ available as digital maps. Anonymous responses of girls and aged 15-30 considered, they could put a good or bad pin on the map to indicate their perceptions, and were invited to participate in a short survey and leave responses. He discussed the key findings of the research which had gathered thousands of responses, Mr. Narayanan divulged that the negative comments greatly outnumbered the positive. The research suggested that sexual harassment, both physical and non-physical is the principal issue surrounding girls and women in Delhi, where 62 percent of respondents had experienced some sort of sexual harassment. He remarked that a chief finding of the study was that the predominant form of discrimination that girls and women face on the streets of Delhi is on account of their Gender. The study revealed that as a response to a bad experience, most girls avoid going to the same location alone and others say that it happens so often they are just used to it. The recommendations made by the girls and women were to ensure better lighting on streets, responsibility of law enforcement authorities, improve infrastructure and address overcrowding. Some salient features of the analysis suggest inclusion of unrepresented voices in protection of street connected children and including more men and boys in the goal of gender transformation. He recommended the following:

- Behavioural change being critical in terms of initiating a conversation or public discussion.
- Need to involve girls in the entire process of any developmental project.
- Need to use online or digital platforms frequently, as girls feel safer to voice their opinions on platforms where anonymity can also be ensured.

Video Message: Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Kenya.

Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee through a video message spoke about gender equality. He began with pointing out that India’s economic growth is being hindered due to gender inequality, and quoted studies which suggest that the potential for country’s economic growth, lagged due to dropping to as low as 4%. Demanding restitution and correction in his address, Mr. Chatterjee quoted that 27% girls are married below the age of 18 years and India has recently featured in various international media for the scourge of sexual violence, rape and exploitation. He called for change especially for the poor who are the most vulnerable as they don’t usually have recourse to justice. Expressing the need for a collective resolution from men, like the ‘he for she’ initiative promoted by UN Women, he remarked that India must become a beacon of hope in the region. He emphasised that there was an opportunity to showcase to the rest of the world that India could rise in terms of gender equality. He strongly felt that need to invest in and ensure education, protection, empowerment, health, employment, and skill building of every girl. He felt that the dignity of women in workplace should never be violated so that they are in a position to achieve their aspirations. He further urged everyone to work towards creating a world full of opportunity where no one is left behind.

PLENARY SESSION 9: INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO GENDER JUSTICE

Chair
Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships - Asia, Plan International

Panellists
- Ms. Mikiko Otani, Member, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- Ms. Nina Vaskunlahdi, Ambassador, Embassy of Finland in India;
- Ms. Sudarshana Kundu, Interim Global Executive and India Country Director, Gender at Work;
- Ms. Bhagyashri Dengle, Executive Director, Plan India;
- Ms. Surina Narula, Founder and Patron, Consortium for Street Children;
- Mr. Timothy Opobo, Child Protection and Advocacy Manager, Child Fund International, Uganda.
The Chair, Mr. Raša Sekulović, Regional Head of Child Protection and Partnerships - Asia, Plan International, welcomed the participants to the third biennial conference on ‘Girls Get Equal’. He summarised the issues and challenges, as well as the methodologies and solutions discussed on previous days to accelerate the efforts of achieving gender justice and social justice. Mr. Sekulović remarked that the world wasn’t always an equal and fair place and that broader social justice also implied tackling and challenging gender stereotypes and patriarchy that have been around for way too long. Substantiating this, he said that there were 100 million girls and young women who did not know how to read, an issue that exists, an unfortunate reality in every country. From legal actions to domestic violence, from human rights violations and discrimination at the workplace, to access to justice, a challenge in many countries and children especially have problems in accessing justice, mainly because of limited capacities in some jurisdictions, requirement of parental or guardian consent to initiate the process, lack of information about the judicial system, lack of access to lawyers and/or financial resources. She felt girls were more disadvantaged when it comes to accessing justice. She indicated greater promise in this domain, as there are positive signs.

There have been various amendments made by the United Nations to the convention of the rights of the child (UNCRC), she shared that there is not even one country that has achieved 100 percent compliance with the norms. It is a challenging and difficult task, which is why the UNCRC continues to engage with Governments to help them implement the convention of the rights of the child. She highlighted the third aspect, the judiciary, the role of judicial and non-judicial remedies, and the importance of effective remedies that can prove advantageous when discrimination exists, an unfortunate reality in every country. From a legislative and administrative side, she felt that the states need to promote human rights and equality. She said that it is important to address the ongoing human rights violations and discrimination at the same time. She felt that it is something that needs correction, the victims need to be rescued and given the support. She remarked that the damage had to be undone and that is where the right to effective remedies comes in. Emphasising that the right to a human right, Ms. Otani found this as the reason why most international human rights treaties adopted by the United Nations explicitly recognise the right to effective remedies. However, the Convention of the Child does not. She further shared that there are explicit provisions on effective remedy. She identified that as a reason why the right to remedy and access to justice issues did not receive enough attention.

Ms. Otani further discussed that children, under the convention receive attention in the judicial systems which have contact with the law, as offenders however, as rights holders, who deserve remedies, are not given adequate attention. Access to justice is a challenge in many countries and children especially have problems in accessing justice, mainly because of limited capacities in some jurisdictions, requirement of parental or guardian consent to initiate the process, lack of information about the judicial system, lack of access to lawyers and/or financial resources. She felt girls were more disadvantaged when it comes to accessing justice. She indicated greater promise in this domain, as there are positive signs. There have been various amendments made by the United Nations to the convention of the rights of the child (UNCRC), she shared that there is not even one country that has achieved 100 percent compliance with the norms. It is a challenging and difficult task, which is why the UNCRC continues to engage with Governments to help them implement the convention of the rights of the child. She highlighted the third aspect, the judiciary, the role of judicial and non-judicial remedies, and the importance of effective remedies that can prove advantageous when discrimination exists, an unfortunate reality in every country. From a legislative and administrative side, she felt that the states need to promote human rights and equality. She said that it is important to address the ongoing human rights violations and discrimination at the same time. She felt that it is something that needs correction, the victims need to be rescued and given the support. She remarked that the damage had to be undone and that is where the right to effective remedies comes in. Emphasising that the right to a human right, Ms. Otani found this as the reason why most international human rights treaties adopted by the United Nations explicitly recognise the right to effective remedies. However, the Convention of the Child does not. She further shared that there are explicit provisions on effective remedy. She identified that as a reason why the right to remedy and access to justice issues did not receive enough attention.

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India as an organisation working with the most vulnerable groups of children especially girls, she felt the progress was remarkable particularly at the grassroots level, by working in collaboration with various other partner organisations. However, she shared that as an organisation, Plan realised that this is not enough as many stakeholders are involved. The need to function like machines and every part of the machine to function effectively was recognised. This included the government, civil society, media, corporates and most crucially, girls themselves. According to her, that the previous sessions had brought forth both bright spots and matters of genuine concern, towards gender justice. She shared relevant examples from Rajasthan, of a movement where women and girls stood up for themselves after facing violence once the Vishakha guidelines came into being. However, even after years of Vishakha judgment, the situation in the same State remains unchanged. She also cited a news report from last month, about how an influential politician suggested that the police should not intervene in cases of child marriage. Ms Dengle felt that comprehensive and co-ordinated response to gender injustice is the need of the hour. Highlighting the brighter side of things, she said that fortunately, a number of laws on various issues like sex-selective abortion are now in place. Sensitisation, she said is crucial at all levels, from decision makers like the government, lawyers and top executives to people at the ground level. Calling for a need to accelerate efforts, take action for girls’ rights and empower girls and women, Ms. Dengle discussed queries which arise in achieving gender justice. She urged everyone to explore how meaningful collaborations between stakeholders could be made possible, how a movement of change could be strategically ignited within the society. On a concluding note, she said that each stakeholder has the potential to further their efforts towards achieving gender justice.

Ms. Surina Narula, Founder and Patron, Consortium for Street Children in her address shared that gender justice is not a new concept in India. Referring to Rabindranath Tagore, she iterated that he too wrote about gender injustice and many of his concepts are followed even today. With decades of experience in working towards advancing the rights of children, particularly street children, she regarded the importance of the General Comment (No. 21) on Street Children under the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Ms. Narula elaborated on the needs of street children, their need for respect, dignity and rights. With respect to the general comment, she quoted street children who expressed their need for acceptance and respect as human beings. She said that often these children felt that living on the street did not imply that they didn’t have entitlement to rights. These children do not want help, charity or pity but consideration from the government to ensure that their rights are not hampered. These children want to become self-sufficient and expect others to give them opportunities to showcase their gifts and talents to achieve their dreams. Sharing anecdotes from her experiences of working with children, she described that street children have different needs, diverse experiences and face different risks. By implying that they are not a homogenous group, she communicated that an integrated approach is necessary, especially in the case of street children and street connected children.

A challenge described by her was the absence of data which made children invisible. In the absence of data, it was not known how many children were in street situations. This affected formulation of fitting policies and as a result measures for street children are ad-hoc or short term. Often data is not systematically collected or aggregated. Estimates fluctuate depending on the socio-economic, cultural, political and other conditions. Under the UNCRC and the General Comment, states are urged to adopt holistic and long term strategies and make necessary budget allocations for children in street situations. She said that children in street situations, as experts in their own lives, their participation in development and implementation of strategies is crucial. She recommended for states to take a cross-sectoral approach to policy, and engage in an inter-state cooperation.

In her conversations with frontline organisations, some of the challenges she iterated include lack of specific schemes for street connected children and their holistic development. Furthermore, access to delivery of justice is undermined due to lack of an institutional system facilitated by a single window approach. She felt that access to justice for children in street situations is highly dependent on civil society organisations as lack of awareness and confidence in street connected children prohibits them from reaching out to the authorities. Other challenges include weak monthly reporting from frontline workers to high officials in departments meant for protection of children. Ms. Narula recommended innovative engagement provisions to include all stakeholders, and suggested that recommendations of audit committees should be incorporated. Strategies should be designed taking the region into account. She also suggested that states may need to develop nationally relevant policies and legal definitions of vulnerable children based on participatory research. This she thought is necessary to facilitate interventions by legally mandated professionals and services. The process of developing legal definitions, however, should not delay action on rights violations. On a concluding note, she urged all stakeholders to read the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially the General Comment Number 21 on Children in Street Situations.

Mr. Timothy Opobo, Child Protection and Advocacy Manager, Child Fund International, Uganda, spoke on the theme of systematic approaches for gender justice and inclusion of social norms and cultural practices in development of workable approaches to the challenge of gender injustice. He recommended that a systems approach needs to be utilised, for stakeholders to work together as a machinery. Drawing from his experiences in Uganda, he spoke of the similarities in the issues faced by vulnerable children in Sub Saharan Africa and India. In his address, he also focused on the need to set up formal as well as informal systems to address gender injustices. Here, he referred to the formal system as laws and policies which are in place, and informal systems as a composition of social and cultural systems and practices. According to him, the challenge of laws and policies remained that if the role of social norms in policies was not considered, a contradiction could arise which could jeopardise implementation and achievement of the policy intent. The approaches, thus, had to be contextually appropriate. He further shared that while considering this issue, the norms themselves, their drivers and custodians, all should be taken into account and the two systems should be linked. He suggested engaging cultural and religious leaders, as well as government and law enforcement officials in a dialogue was important to design the courses of action better. The approaches employed, as per him should help in understanding the social norms and the drivers of these norms from the communities themselves.

He also spoke about the different layers of justice indicating that there are common links between poverty, child exploitation and gender injustice, which need to be addressed in conjunction. To create a safer environment for children, parenting needs to be addressed and additionally change must start from an early childhood development stage. He indicated about the need to train children right from school or home to stand against the gender differences by including both girls and boys in the conversation.
He further appealed to the media fraternity to discourage victims from not reporting the cases by over exaggerating the number of already registered cases. He felt that the number went up as the reporting had gone up than before which is indicative of a positive environment and that the media should support it. He emphasised that the rise in numbers should not be considered as a defeat. It should be considered as a way how people are responding to the system. He spoke about NITI Aayog’s Aspirational District Programme, which focused on the under-developed pockets of India. Through the programme, they learnt that gender disparities exist mostly in health and education sectors. He further shared that the programme has generated a competitive environment, where the district magistrates too are shown the results of other districts which perform better, explaining the usefulness of this comparison. On a concluding note, he urged the audience to highlight the problems and join hands in combating one issue at a time.

Dr. Veerendra K. Mishra, Director, National Service Scheme, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, highlighted that the rights of children, especially girls in particular, is not a subject to be imposed upon but should naturally be a priority. He said that different parts of the country have different state laws to deal with these rights in their own way. Raising a point about accountability, he suggested that while holding something or someone accountable, we usually forget to fix the cultural baggage that exists within the society. After having multiple schemes, policies and programmes, there still exists a struggle, which is due to the mind-sets of the implementers. He also pointed out the gaps in the policies and schemes saying that they are amended too frequently, which reflects a lack of understanding of the issue. Another issue that he highlighted was about trafficking of children by their own parents that went ignored. He recommended that if a child needs protection or feels threatened, then irrespective of the relation with the child, he or she should be held accountable. He also spoke about social media content and the need for scrutiny. Concluding his address, Dr. Mishra discussed the work of National Service Scheme and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports who have managed to engage youth from rural areas in the mainstream and contributed to capacity building of young people who are the future of the country.

Mr. Khagesh Garg, Director-Dept. of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India; spoke about the need for national initiatives focused on children, such as the Plan for Every Child – National Conference, as they determine the future of the nation. While dealing with drug prevention, transgender issues and beggary, the issue of street children within these subjects emerged. In his opinion, nutrition, education and health should be integrated into child protection concerns.

Speaking of policy, he said that there are multiple schemes focusing on these three areas, principally for children, and yet the challenges persist. Citing an example of a high dropout rate among girls, he recommended that the approach and method of these schemes should be changed or revised in order to improve the outcomes. He endorsed for the inclusion of women, children and civil society’s opinion to formulate and present the most effective proposals to the government so that better results are ensured.

Mr. Raimund Magis, Deputy Ambassador of the European Union to India, highly regarded the significance of Plan India’s initiatives, by noting that advocating gender equality and empowerment have encouraged a crucial discussion. He said that it was important to break certain mental barriers that exist about girls in the society. It should inspire and encourage people towards the idea that everyone should support girls not only in daring to dream to but to achieve their dreams as well. He spoke about how Plan India and the European Union have been working together with over 50 million girls and women. Through Plan India’s initiative around the International Day of the Girl, they have invited girls to ‘Takeover’ positions of power, the roles of ambassadors, which have served as an inspiration to break barriers. He said, if we don’t make progress with women’s rights and girls’ rights, then the progress in implementing project 2030 of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals would not be successful. Speaking of their importance, he felt that in order to achieve these goals, it was important to engage the government and other key stakeholders with organisations like Plan India. Recognising the importance of the issue, he concluded by stating that girls’ rights was everyone’s concern, and that all stakeholders should come together in their advancement.

Ms. Rathi Vinay Jha, Chair, Governing Board, Plan India, congratulated Ms. Bhagyashri Dengie, Mr. Pradeep Narayanan and the entire team of Plan India for taking the initiative of bringing all the stakeholders together to talk about children and take forward various aspects of child development. She mentioned that it was time to take lessons from information gathered about challenges, the host
of ideas to tackle these issues to move forward and create a better and safer society for children. According to her, it was important to change the attitudes of parents before changing the mind-set of the patriarchal society. Taking reference from her years of working in the development sector, she said that it takes more than just the government to bring about the needed change. The toughest challenge she felt was to make schemes, laws, programmes and policies available to children, especially girls. She urged the NGOs to unite their voices in sectors where they want the government to intervene. She also said that the government should be open towards the voices from NGOs, especially the ones working with and for children. Furthermore, she asked the government officials to discuss avenues to reach out for collaboration. Another important aspect is the involvement of mothers or mother-in-law’s, who may restrict girls from accessing their rights. Reaching out to mothers is just as important as reaching out to fathers to successfully change mind-sets. In terms of advocacy, she concluded by recommending state level conferences and village level interactions to address the issue at every level for far reaching impact. 

Vote of Thanks by Mr. Pradeep Narayanan- Director, Programme Strategy and Policy, Plan India.

Mr. Pradeep Narayanan delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, all the speakers, guests, partners, youths and the entire team of Plan India for the successful completion of the conference. He appreciated the partnership of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment with Plan India. The conference reached out to youth, children and over 500 grassroots institutions across the country. Citing that 740 villages of South India were declared child friendly, he divulged that such an achievement was the outcome of collective efforts. He said that taking this journey forward, the goal should be to link villages with grass-root institutions to collaborate and advance efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTCOMES FROM THE CONFERENCE

The three-day conference focused on issues like street children, trafficking of children, missing children, issues with the shelter homes, gender justice and the approaches to create a safer environment and society for children.

The first day focused on prevention and safeguarding children and their rights. From the discussions, it came out that the Ministry of Women and Child development has various programmes to promote and safeguard children’s rights. The ministry has also started using technology as a major source of gathering and providing information. However, as discussed by many speakers there is lack of accurate data. There is a need to conduct more surveys in order to build evidence for the prominence of the issue. Every stakeholder involved has a different role to play and to identify that role is most important. There is a need for sensitisation towards the issue from all the stakeholders. There is a need to change the patriarchal mind-set. Normalisation of gender discrimination is a major issue. There is no dearth of laws but effective implementation of those laws is a major issue due to which a rigorous implementation of laws with extremely punitive measures are required. There is also need for allocating the right amount of financial resources. The implementation is required at the grassroots level and commitment of all the stakeholders as a team is needed. There is need for development and establishment of child friendly courts.
The second day focused on Justice and Accountability. From the discussions, it was observed that there is a need to look into non-institutional ways of care for children. There is a need to manage and allocate resources in a way that it reaches the children. There is a need to decrease repeated juvenile crimes by providing skill building and psychological support. There is a need to improve quality of education especially among girls. Labour force participation and decision making has to be encouraged among women. Holistic approach from the society is required for effective implementation of any programme concerning children.

With regard to planning and delivering gender justice, the childcare agencies should exercise child’s rehabilitation and re-integration into the mainstream society. There is a need to understand the depth of the issue, whom to include during the planning stage, what needs to change etc. There is a need to raise boys better and include both girls and boys in the process of attitude and mentality change. In terms of technology, data of police stations can be used to identify and locate hubs of crimes. Exposure and capacity building needs to be provided to agencies dealing with cyber-crimes. Strong regulation should be exercised for technology service providers in order to reduce the number of cybercrimes.

Day 2

The third day focused on responses towards a just future. The principal idea was to focus on the process and measurement of a gender transformative approach. Need for the right design, tools and analysis framework to measure the gender transformative changes emerged from the discussions. Experts agreed that the gender transformative approach should be driven at the individual or community levels. The approach recommended by many speakers during the course of the conference was to adopt a combination of formal and informal systems in dealing with issues of children and their rights on a multi-sectoral front. Behavioural change is crucial to transforming the way children, especially girls are treated in the society, within the community and within the family. Many speakers called for an end to the silence on discriminatory social and cultural practices that impede the realisation of girls’ rights. Social institutions and their power needs to be recognised, and in doing so, convergence and integration should not only be a feature of organisations and governing institutions, but also of formal and informal institutions of policy and law, culture and social norms. The need for adequate funding in the domain of gender justice was acknowledged in order to ensure sustained impact. Another strong recommendation was to include voices of children, especially girls, in the design and implementation of schemes and policies, as well as the delivery of justice.
CONFERENCE SNAPSHOT
MAKE MY WORLD SAFE

REPORT OF THE STATE CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN FOR NATIONAL CONFERENCE: PLAN FOR EVERY CHILD 2018

ANNEXURE 1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2, which pledges to end violence against children by 2030, Plan India entrusted Sesame Workshop India (SWI), an educational organisation that uses the power of muppets and media to help all children grow smarter, stronger and kinder, in order to elucidate, amplify, and address children’s views of their own safety.

In November of 2018, Plan India and SWI conducted state-level consultations with children between the ages of six and twelve years old in Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana. During each session, trained facilitators used specialised research techniques designed to provide young children with the space and language to discuss their specific safety concerns. These sessions were supplemented with focus groups with caregivers. The results indicated that throughout India, children have serious concerns about safety in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. These findings were shared with a group of distinguished panellists and an enthusiastic audience during a plenary session at Plan India’s third annual National Conference - Plan For Every Child: Girls Get Equal. The discussion generated a list of practical, immediate actions that various stakeholders can undertake in order to improve India’s existing child protection system.

“Please tell people in the neighbourhood to stop drinking and fighting. It’s scary.”
INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT GOALS

Across the globe, children are in danger. In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that one billion children between the ages of two and seventeen had experienced physical, sexual, and emotional violence in the past year. UNICEF estimated that in 2017, approximately 3 out of every four children between the ages of two and four years old regularly experienced “violent discipline” at the hands of their caregivers, and that one in three children between the ages of 13- and 15-years-old regularly experience bullying. In India, the National Crime Records Bureau reported that the rate of crimes against children had increased by over 23%. This is particularly disturbing considering that the majority of violence against children in India and globally goes unreported, suggesting that the official numbers are much lower than the reality.

Clearly, in order to meet this goal, India’s current child protection structure must be strengthened. In order to address this need, Plan India entrusted SWI to create a two pronged approach to prioritize children’s voices in ongoing conversations about child protection. First, the consultations were conducted with almost 100 children in 4 states i.e. Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana, using instruments and interventions especially designed to draw out children’s voices. Second, a plenary session was organised called as “Make My World Safe” on the second day of the third annual Plan India’s National Conference Plan for Every Child-Girls Get Equal. Combined, these two interventions were designed to elucidate concrete actions that could be undertaken to improve India’s child protection mechanisms at the state and local level.

To this end, the following report is divided into two sections: the first outlines the results of consultations conducted in four states designed to elicit children’s perceptions of their own safety, or lack thereof. The second summarizes the discussion undertaken at the plenary session, providing information about the participants, their reactions to the research, and their subsequent recommendations for action.

STATE LEVEL CONSULTATIONS

Between November 22 and 29, 2018, Sesame Workshop India conducted state level consultations with children and their caregivers in Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh.

The study was designed with the following objectives in mind:

1. How do children define safe spaces?
2. What are children’s protection related concerns, and how do they differ by age and gender?
3. How can stakeholders such as parents, teachers, government workers, and other community members play a more effective role in keeping children safe?

Experts from Plan India trained SWI staff in the fundamentals of child protection. Following this training, SWI drew upon their deep experience with conducting research with children to design innovative instruments intended to provide children with the space and language to express their feelings about their personal safety. What follows is a description of these instruments, as well as the facilitation guide designed for caregivers.

CHILD LEVEL RESULTS

Researchers met with a total of 97 children ranging from ages six to twelve years old across four states. Tables 1 provides an overview of the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>6-8 year olds</th>
<th>9-12 year olds</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children were grouped according to age (one group was 6-8, and the other 9-10) and engaged in a series of play-based group and individual activities. Facilitators were trained to not only administer the instruments, but also to record specific types of observations to enable data analysis.

In order to create a comfortable environment, sessions opened with interactions between Chamki and Googly, muppets from Galli Galli Sim Sim—the Indian adaptation of the renowned television show Sesame Street and children. In Maharashtra and Bihar, Chamki introduced children to the researchers, and explained the reason for the consultation and the context. In UP and Telangana, Googly did the introductions. The Muppets were involved in the first icebreaker activity (see below) and, at times, the second. Researchers introduced the Muppets to engage children, create a safe space, and get children excited about the activities.

Prior to the beginning of the research, families were asked to sign consent forms for themselves and their children’s participation. These forms were written in their respective vernacular language. Children were also verbally asked for their consent to participate. Each session was videotaped, so consent was recorded in the language of children’s choice.

Next, children participated in two icebreaker activities. In the first, children were asked to describe themselves using one adjective, for example, “Happy Isha.” The remainder of the group then responded with, “Welcome, Happy Isha.” This activity set the tone for a supportive environment in which all voices were valued and welcomed.

In the second icebreaker, children were asked to match the expressions on a series of cards depicting the faces of people experiencing various emotions, including happiness, sadness, and fright. This exercise primed children for expressing their feelings by providing them with the language they needed to describe their emotions.

After the icebreakers, children participated in a variety of group and individual activities in which they were given multiple ways to express their feelings about their safety in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. A summary of these methods are provided in Table 2.

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1. https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-familiar-face/
2. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-children
Through these child friendly methods, Plan India in association with SWI was able to gather specific, relevant data about how children perceived their world. In order to triangulate results across groups, Plan India and SWI conducted focus groups with caregivers.

**CAREGIVER LEVEL RESULTS**

In each state, researchers held focus groups with caregivers, a category that included children's immediate and extended family, such as mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. In total, 45 caregivers participated across the four states.

Facilitators asked caregivers a series of open ended questions regarding child safety. After recording answers, facilitators followed up with clarifying questions designed to map out differences according to gender and age, and to identify problems and solutions specific to the home, family, neighborhood, and community.

**STATE LEVEL FINDINGS**

The data was analysed primarily through measuring the frequency of a set of emergent codes within and between groups. Plan India was particularly interested in differences based on gender and age within the child respondents. These measurements were supplemented with anecdotes from the focus group discussions, which were translated from the various languages and recorded by the facilitators. The resulting frequencies were classified according to the Bronfenbrenner ecosystem model, specifically as they related to the home, school, neighborhood, or community. In addition, a professional psychologist was asked to analyse the visual data, particularly children's drawings of safe spaces.

Although each site has unique characteristics, many, if not most, safety concerns were consistent. These included the identification of male relatives, school officials, road traffic, and railway crossings as potential dangers. Table 3 below details the various codes and their frequencies in each of the states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Principal and Sir (65%)</td>
<td>Street (58%)</td>
<td>Railways tracks (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peon (33%)</td>
<td>Toilet (50%)</td>
<td>Road / traffic (63%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharsntra</td>
<td>Principal (65%)</td>
<td>Street (65%)</td>
<td>Railways tracks (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peon (57%)</td>
<td>Police (57%)</td>
<td>Road / traffic (57%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telangana</td>
<td>Peon (33%)</td>
<td>Street (59%)</td>
<td>Road / traffic (63%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sir (30%)</td>
<td>Auto Rickshaw (67%)</td>
<td>Field (33%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Principal (61%)</td>
<td>Street (91%)</td>
<td>Railways track (83%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peon (61%)</td>
<td>Vendor (78%)</td>
<td>Road / traffic (70%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections provide an in-depth look at the results garnered from each state, focusing not only on crosscutting themes, but also the deviations from these patterns.

**UTTAR PRADESH**

In Uttar Pradesh, children consistently identified male figures as sources of insecurity in the home. Compared to the other populations, children at this site were more likely to associate male household members with safety and security. Grandfathers, for example, were identified as safe across the sample; notably, 100% of children in the older age group mentioned this particular relative. Gender also seems to be a determinant in children's perceptions of their own safety in the home. For example, while 86% of boys identified fathers as safe individuals, girls identified fathers with a lack of security. Similarly, while girls frequently identified homes as safe spaces, it was one of the most frequently mentioned unsafe spaces in boys’ groups. This may be reflective of caregiver attitudes: in focus groups, caregivers expressed more concern about girls’ safety than boys' safety. Mothers, in particular, worried about girls having to relieve themselves in fields in the middle of the night, thus stressing the need for safer, more accessible toilets, ideally in the home.

Although 83% of the overall sample of children identified classrooms as safe spaces, 61% identified both peons and principals as threats. Upon further questioning, children expressed...
a fear of being beaten at school for providing incorrect answers, and being bullied by older children, especially boys. Children also repeatedly mentioned bullying as a recurring worry. The findings point to the need to train school personnel to improve their abilities to interact with children, and to combat bullying. It also highlights the divide between children and adults: overall, caregivers perceived schools as safe spaces, even though children clearly expressed anxiety about many of the individuals within school walls.

Children identified a number of specific reasons why they feel unsafe around (usually older) individuals in their lives. Alcoholism emerged as a common reason why adults, and in particular adult males, made children feel unsafe. This trend was confirmed by caregivers, who reported feeling uncomfortable about large groups of idle men who would reportedly drink and then cause problems in the neighborhood. Underlying children’s concerns was a general feeling of a lack of warmth from caregivers, at home and in school, which prompted children to adopt protective behaviors, a trend that became evident after analysing children’s drawings.

The findings highlight the need to be cognisant of the fact that spaces are not just physical places, but also the people that inhabit them. Children’s frequent focus on corporal punishment and a lack of emotional security around adults suggest the need for providing caregivers with the training necessary to interact with children peacefully. This may also include counseling services for adults who are suffering from alcoholism or other types of stress that result in violent behavior.

Findings related to school illustrate the delineation children made between safe spaces and safe people. It also pointed to the fact some safe spaces could, with some changes, become safer. For example, although across age groups, 74% of children identified the market as a place where they felt safe, 78% also identified a local vendor as an unsafe person.

Within the neighborhood, gender continued to play a role in perceptions of safety. For example, 63% of girls mentioned the local hand pump as a safe space, 57% of boys identified it as an unsafe space. While these differences require further probing, it is clear that boys and girls have different needs for their security, some of which occur with age. A summary of findings by gender and age can be found in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Unsafe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (100%)</td>
<td>Aunt (67%)</td>
<td>Father (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-room (100%)</td>
<td>Peer (86%)</td>
<td>Sis (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal (43%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (43%)</td>
<td>Sis (29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (100%)</td>
<td>Aunt (75%)</td>
<td>Father (75%)</td>
<td>Mother (31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-room (75%)</td>
<td>Peer (63%)</td>
<td>Sis (56%)</td>
<td>Playground (81%)</td>
<td>River (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One result crossed gender and age divides: 100% of children felt that streets were unsafe, due presumably to traffic conditions. This points to a recurring theme in all state consultations, which is the need to improve road safety in India.

Slightly more than half (58%) of children in the younger age group identified community workers, such as Anganwadi workers (AWWs) and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) health workers, as safe adults. Similarly, 82% of older children associated doctors with safety and security. As in Bihar, the feeling of safety around community workers extended to community spaces: 87% of children across age groups associated playgrounds with security. These findings support the need to expand access to free, publicly funded early childhood care and services and institutions, such as Anganwadis, a recommendation that was mentioned several times during the plenary session. They also highlight the importance of implementing India’s stated commitment to expand the number of publicly available playgrounds. In fact, schedule 12 of the Right to Education Act mandates that every primary school must have a playground on its premises. While this provision was included as a way to foster physical and cognitive development, the findings from this study reinforce their additional importance to children’s emotional well-being.

Table 5: Recommendations: Uttarakhand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Unsafe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (100%)</td>
<td>Aunt (67%)</td>
<td>Father (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-room (100%)</td>
<td>Peer (86%)</td>
<td>Sis (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal (43%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (43%)</td>
<td>Sis (29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (100%)</td>
<td>Aunt (75%)</td>
<td>Father (75%)</td>
<td>Mother (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-room (75%)</td>
<td>Peer (63%)</td>
<td>Sis (56%)</td>
<td>Playground (81%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The children from Maharashtra were members of a marginalised population living inside Borivali National Park. As in other sites, evaluation of children's drawings indicated that children feel a lack of warmth in their homes. This finding supports the suggestion from the plenary session of providing counseling for adults, including parents, about how to interact positively with children. It may also suggest that parents themselves are under a great deal of stress, perhaps due to poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, or other identity-related issues. Interventions at the adult level related to livelihoods, treatment for addiction, or the provision of more reliable services could lead to a higher quality of life that could, in turn, improve parents' ability to be emotionally available to their children. A full breakdown of safe and unsafe entities broken down by age and gender can be found in Table 6 below.

### Table 6: Most Frequently Mentioned Safe and Unsafe Entities By Gender and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Home Safe</th>
<th>Home Unsafe</th>
<th>School Safe</th>
<th>School Unsafe</th>
<th>Community Safe</th>
<th>Community Unsafe</th>
<th>Neighborhood Safe</th>
<th>Neighborhood Unsafe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Grandmother (91%)</td>
<td>Father (45%)</td>
<td>Classroom (91%)</td>
<td>Principal (45%)</td>
<td>River (100%)</td>
<td>Big boy (82%)</td>
<td>Street (55%)</td>
<td>(55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home (91%)</td>
<td>Aunt (18%)</td>
<td>Peon (36%)</td>
<td>Peon (36%)</td>
<td>Field (91%)</td>
<td>Sister (82%)</td>
<td>Local vendor (45%)</td>
<td>(45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interior (91%)</td>
<td>Mother (91%)</td>
<td>Market (73%)</td>
<td>Market (73%)</td>
<td>Market (73%)</td>
<td>Girl (82%)</td>
<td>Hamdampur (36%)</td>
<td>(36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Grandmother (67%)</td>
<td>Father (67%)</td>
<td>Ma'am (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (53%)</td>
<td>Railway track (55%)</td>
<td>Big boy (67%)</td>
<td>Street (75%)</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home (67%)</td>
<td>Grandfather (50%)</td>
<td>Classroom (58%)</td>
<td>Doctor (83%)</td>
<td>Railway track (83%)</td>
<td>Big boy (58%)</td>
<td>Handpump (50%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interior (67%)</td>
<td>Uncle (50%)</td>
<td>Aunty (42%)</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
<td>Doctor (83%)</td>
<td>Sister (58%)</td>
<td>Local vendor (50%)</td>
<td>(50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother (57%)</td>
<td>Son (55%)</td>
<td>Sir (58%)</td>
<td>(75%)</td>
<td>Police (57%)</td>
<td>(57%)</td>
<td>(57%)</td>
<td>(57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children frequently mentioned mothers and grandmothers as safe figures, while fathers, grandfathers, and uncles were mentioned as unsafe, regardless of the participant's age or gender. This may be reflective of gender socialisation that encourages male aggression and female submission, but it may also be related to the fact that many children identified substance abuse as a threat to the safety of young boys, who, in this community, were vulnerable to addiction to paint thinner. This might affect males in the community into adulthood, thereby causing erratic or violent behavior. Indeed, during the caregiver focus group in Maharashtra—a group that was exclusively female-participants described “people from outside” getting local children addicted to paint thinners, as well as the disturbing frequency of alcoholism. Mothers in the focus group said that groups of men would often get drunk and “create problems” for families, making it dangerous for children to step outside alone.

While in other states, children were split about whether school principals were safe or unsafe, in Maharashtra, 65% of respondents considered the principal threatening. It should be noted that in this group, children generally used the word “principal” to refer to the head of the church. Their fear, they explained, came from witnessing the principal scolding their parents (children did not give specific reasons), and for being scolded themselves for behaving improperly in church. Related to the term principal, though, many children expressed a fear of being physically punished at school for failing to complete their homework, for providing incorrect answers, for arriving tardily or being absent. While 70% of the sample considered “Ma’am” at school a safe person, 43% identified “Sir” as an unsafe person. Upon further investigation, children indicated that male teachers would physically beat them when children didn’t do their homework, while female teachers did not. See Table 6 for more.

### Table 7: Children’s Perceptions of Authority Figures Based on Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Adults Most Frequently Named as Safe (%)</th>
<th>Adults Most Frequently Named as Unsafe (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 years old</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12 years old</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perhaps because they lived in a pastoral setting, participants named outdoor locations as safe spaces: 91% of children considered the river a safe place, and 83% named a pond as a safe place, while 91% of boys named the field as a safe place. Despite this trend, upon further questioning, children expressed a fear of wild animals, like snakes and tigers that lived within the reserve, a concern that worried caregivers said could be addressed through providing better lighting and more vigilance. Although more investigation is needed to explain this contradiction, children may be expressing a difference between feelings of mental and emotional safety and physical safety.

Unlike in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, children in Maharashtra viewed community workers as threats, rather than as points of safety. Across the sample, 57% of children associated...
policemen with a lack of safety, mostly because they had watched policemen jail community members and, at times, close family. Additionally, 75% of girls and 64% of young children identified doctors as threatening, primarily because of their fear of injections. Although this may be a natural fear of painful needles, it might also be symptomatic of a lack of sensitivity among health officials meant to interact with children.

This sense of distrust may indicate a lack of quality services within this area, or a history of identity-based discrimination from government officials. It certainly points to a need for counseling and training of government servants who work with children, particularly those in minority groups, as mentioned during the plenary session.

Table 8: Recommendations: Maharashtra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide parents with training in non-violent discipline</td>
<td>Train educators in non-violent disciplinary techniques</td>
<td>Improve vigilance about wild animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide substance abuse counseling</td>
<td>Work with local church to provide counseling and sensitivity training</td>
<td>Maintain natural public spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide livelihoods training</td>
<td>Implement anti-bullying curriculum</td>
<td>Investigate complaints about local touts encouraging addiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide gender sensitivity training</td>
<td>Provide sensitivity training to service providers such as policemen, doctors, and Anganwadi workers</td>
<td>Provide awareness training for local touts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TELANGANA**

Telangana was the only urban site, and the sample was 100% female. Despite these differences, many of the findings were consistent with those of other states. As in other areas, children in Telangana described their homes as safe spaces: across the sample, 85% of respondents named their home interiors as safe places, 89% identified mothers as safe persons, and 74% associated grandmothers with security. Yet, analyses of children’s drawings indicated a widespread feeling of insecurity about the home environment, a trend supported by the fact that 44% identified fathers as threats. Additionally 67% identified uncles as threats, and 48% identified Aunts as threats, mostly because these adults threatened, scolded, and beat them for misbehaviour.

During focus groups, girls frequently brought up concerns about domestic violence. While the abuse was not always directed at them, participants claimed that witnessing fights between family members made them feel unsafe. This may be related to age: 71% of younger children identified fathers as safe figures, while 50% of older children saw them as a threat. It is possible that children's perceptions of fathers change over time as they recognise patterns of abuse that are frequently precipitated by male relatives. Specific responses from children broken down by age and gender can be found in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Most Frequently Mentioned Safe and Unsafe Entities By Gender and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Unsafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls (6-8 yo)</td>
<td>Mother (89%)</td>
<td>Uncle (67%)</td>
<td>Class-room (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home interior (85%)</td>
<td>Aunt (48%)</td>
<td>Principal (81%)</td>
<td>Sir (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother (74%)</td>
<td>Father (44%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (78%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Group (6-8 yo)</td>
<td>Home interior (86%)</td>
<td>Mother (86%)</td>
<td>Class-room (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House (86%)</td>
<td>Father (71%)</td>
<td>Grand-father (43%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Group (9-12 yo)</td>
<td>Mother (90%)</td>
<td>Uncle (57%)</td>
<td>Class-room (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home interior (85%)</td>
<td>Aunt (43%)</td>
<td>Grand-father (71%)</td>
<td>Peon (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother (80%)</td>
<td>Father (50%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (80%)</td>
<td>Ma’am (20%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the sample, 89% of children named classrooms as safe spaces, even though they also expressed fear about being beaten for not completing homework or completing homework incorrectly. However, more than half of the total sample (58%) named older boys as a threat at school. Additional questioning indicated that, as they age, girls may experience more and more sexual harassment. Younger children, too, expressed a fear of older boys, but talked more specifically about bullying. The problem was so severe, in fact, that in their focus group discussion, caregivers suggested having closed circuit cameras in classrooms and segregating classes by gender.

Children associated community institutions with safety. Almost three-fourths of the younger children named Anganwadis as safe spaces, and 93% of the total sample identified playgrounds as safe spaces. More than half of the group, however, associated policemen with a lack of safety.

Younger and older girls seemed to have different ideas about who and what spaces were safe and unsafe, suggesting that for children at this site, perceptions of safety evolve over time. The handpump, for example, was named an unsafe space by 71% of the younger group, but named a safe space by 60% of the older group. Upon probing, this was because...
the younger children felt that the water coming from the handpump might be unclean, and therefore a source of sickness. Additionally, 71% of younger children identified the local vendor as a safe individual, while more than half of older children identified the local vendor as a possible threat. This may be related to sexual harassment as girls age, or to increased domestic responsibility. As girls age, they may be asked to go to the handpump more often to collect water, thereby developing community there. In contrast, they may be asked to haggle for provisions with local vendors, thereby creating a negative relationship.

In Telangana, as in all other states, children identified the railway tracks and the road as unsafe places in their neighborhoods (see Table 1). While the lack of safety children feel on roadways was not discussed during plenary sessions, it merits further investigation.

### Table 10: Recommendations: Telangana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Train parents in peaceful parenting and positive discipline</td>
<td>Introduce closed circuit cameras</td>
<td>Improve road safety</td>
<td>Increase number and awareness of Anganwadis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide counseling and anti-domestic violence interventions</td>
<td>Implement anti-bullying curriculum</td>
<td>Increase access to potable water</td>
<td>Provide sensitivity training to policemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segregate classes by gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIHAR**

In Bihar, consultations occurred in Vaishali district where, as in all sites, children felt a lack of warmth at home. Still, 96% of the sample considered the interior of the home a safe space – notably, 100% of younger children felt this way. Children said that they are often subject to corporal punishment from relatives, particularly male authority figures like grandfathers and uncles. Although children consistently associated male figures, such as grandfathers, fathers, and uncles with a lack of safety, their perceptions of female figures were less clear.

In schools, 75% of boys identified female teachers (Ma’ams) as safe figures, and only 25% found them unsafe; girls, on the other hand, were split on female teachers, with exactly 50% considering them safe and 50% considering them unsafe. Across age groups, bullying was a common cause for concern. Caregivers mentioned that it was particularly difficult when upper class boys were bullies, since families felt they had little recourse for complaint, and no way to stop the behaviour. This data points to the need to address identity-based violence and impunity, which, particularly in rural areas, is reinforced by existing power structures dictated by class and caste.

In schools, girls and boys found toilets to be unsafe. When probed further, children said that they felt this way because they were asked to clean the toilets, work they did not enjoy, and which they were aware might lead to sickness and disease. Even if children did not clean toilets, most reported that they were disgusting, and therefore feared having to use them.

Children tended to associate community workers with safety. Across age groups, participants identified doctors (75%) Anganwadi workers (71%) and “community didis” (71%) as individuals who made them feel secure. The majority (87%) of older children additionally identified policemen as safe, a fact that is particularly notable given that children in Maharashtra and Telangana identified policemen as threats. A similar trend occurred with local community spaces: 83% of the total sample said they considered playgrounds safe spaces, and 79% identified classrooms as safe spaces, even if the people who inhabited these spaces (such as principals or older boys) were identified as threats. This trend suggests the need for greater access to community programming administered by Anganwadi workers and others.

In terms of community spaces, boys expressed feelings of insecurity in the market. Specifically, they said that they were afraid of being kidnapped. In one focus group, when asked why a child in a picture looked fearful, a respondent tellingly replied, “because he is in the market and is feeling scared that someone will take him/ her away.” This fear is supported by data: according to the National Crime Records Bureau, in 2016, Bihar reported 8.3% of kidnappings in India, giving it the dubious honor of ranking third in the nation for this crime. Interestingly, though, although this study included the two states that reported higher rates of kidnapping – Uttar Pradesh (18.1%) and Maharashtra (10.6%) – children in these groups did not explicitly express a fear of kidnapping.

Another unique aspect of the Bihar population was children’s tendencies to identify natural areas as unsafe spaces. For example, 60% of older children and 50% of boys associated the river with a lack of safety, mostly because of their fear of drowning. Additionally 54% of the total sample said the same about the field, perhaps because that is where children must relieve themselves, sometimes at night, when they feel most insecure. In every other state, rivers, ponds, and fields were mentioned as areas of safety and security. This requires further investigation, but these fears could also be linked to a fear of kidnapping. Within the neighborhood, young children in Bihar were the only group across the study to identify rickshaws as safe spaces. Specifically, 78% of children between the ages of 6 and 8 mentioned rickshaws as safe, making it one of the most frequent codes. Although rickshaws were not mentioned in the groups in Uttar Pradesh, in both Maharashtra and Hyderabad children specifically named them as unsafe. It is unclear why this was true with the youngest children in Bihar, especially since caregivers expressed anxiety about children’s trips to and from school. More investigation is needed to understand this trend. For a full breakdown of children’s responses sorted by age and gender, see Table 11 below.

### Table 11: Most Frequently Mentioned Safe and Unsafe Entities

#### By Gender and Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Unsafe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Interior (100%)</td>
<td>Grandfather (75%)</td>
<td>Grandfather (75%)</td>
<td>Grandmother (75%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father (83%)</td>
<td>Principal (58%)</td>
<td>Motorbike (70%)</td>
<td>Increase number and awareness of safety mechanisms around bodies of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt (75%)</td>
<td>Ma'am (50%)</td>
<td>Road (50%)</td>
<td>Increase anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle (67%)</td>
<td>Peon (58%)</td>
<td>Road (75%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother (67%)</td>
<td>Class-room (75%)</td>
<td>Road (75%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (83%)</td>
<td>Principal (58%)</td>
<td>Road (75%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (50%)</td>
<td>Ma'am (50%)</td>
<td>Road (75%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peon (58%)</td>
<td>Principal (58%)</td>
<td>Road (75%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home interior (92%)</td>
<td>Peon (67%)</td>
<td>Street (50%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Younger Group (6-8 yo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father (66%)</td>
<td>Principal (44%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (44%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (44%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (56%)</td>
<td>Principal (44%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother (56%)</td>
<td>Principal (44%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (60%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peon (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home interior (100%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Older Group (9-12 yo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aunt (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather (56%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother (56%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother (60%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peon (67%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home interior (93%)</td>
<td>Principal (40%)</td>
<td>Street (56%)</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caregivers in Bihar were particularly invested in girls’ safety, stating the need to delay marriages and provide girls with greater access to education. Consequently, they were particularly concerned about improving neighborhood and community safety through a gender lens, something that could be addressed at the local and state level.

Table 12: Recommendations: Bihar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Train parents in peaceful parenting and positive discipline</td>
<td>Increase access to playgrounds</td>
<td>Provide safety mechanisms around bodies of water</td>
<td>Increase number and awareness of safety mechanisms around bodies of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide counseling for parents and children to improve relationships</td>
<td>Implement anti-bullying curriculum</td>
<td>Improve road safety</td>
<td>Improve anti-trafficking policing methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement anti-bullying curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Each year, Plan India’s National Conference: Plan for Every Child brings together a variety of stakeholders who are invested in generating concrete recommendations for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.2, which envisions ending violence against children by the year 2030. This year, Plan India organised the conference on December 5th, 6th and 7th, 2018, in association with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. The conference theme was Plan for Every Child-Girls Get Equal, and its stated goals revolved around the area of child protection. Specifically, Plan India intended that the convening would lead to the strengthening of existing child protection systems in India and where appropriate, new, more effective approaches to child protection. The first day of the conference focused on prevention and safeguarding, while the second day focused on justice and accountability for children.

Plan India entrusted SWI to host a Plenary Session “Make my world safe”, which took place on the second day. The plenary was organised with the following goals in mind:

1. To amplify and include the voices of children in ongoing discussions on child protection, particularly within the context of the Plan For Every Child conference.
2. To open a dialogue about defining and creating safe spaces for children with key stakeholders at the national level.
3. To generate a set of clear action points and recommendations to be implemented at the local, state, and national level, based specifically on the feedback collected from children.

The following section provides an overview of the plenary, including a description of the event flow, a summary of each speaker’s key points, and a list of action items at the local, state, and national level that resulted from the discussion.

FLOW OF THE SESSION

The session began by highlighting the most important voices of the day: the voices of children. Galli Galli Sim Sim Muppets Chinki and Elmo took the stage to introduce a group of boys and girls who participated in the consultations in Bihar and UP. Children interacted with the Muppets on stage, introducing themselves and their ideas about safety. This not only provided context for the session, but was a visual reminder of the urgency of the work to be undertaken that day.

Next, Rubita Gidwani, SWI’s Creative Director, provided context for the plenary by giving a brief overview of Plan India’s National Conference, and gave some background on the current state of child protection in India. Gidwani’s introduction was followed by a short highlight video introducing the consultations and featuring some of the child and adult voices captured in the study.

Next, Ira Joshi, Vice President of Education and Research at SWI, gave an overview of Plan India’s National Conference, and gave some background on the current state of child protection in India. Gidwani’s introduction was followed by a short highlight video introducing the consultations and featuring some of the child and adult voices captured in the study.

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EXPERT TESTIMONY

The panel of experts who attended were:

- Shri Manoj Kumar Singh, Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India implementing ICPS and Scheme for working children in need of Care and Protection/Childline, Juvenile Justice Act, CARA / Adoption/ Foster Care/ Aftercare, CRECHE, NIPCCD Administration.
- Dr. Amit Sen, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Director and Co-Founder of Children First.
- Dr. Mamta Borgoyary, Synergos Senior Fellow and CEO, FXB India Suraksha
- Mr. Shambhu, Editor, Balakanama, a newsletter for and by street and working Children
As is clear from their backgrounds, panelists brought a variety of perspectives to their interpretation of the data. The following is a brief overview of each panelist’s comments at the plenary.

SHRI MANOJ KUMAR SINGH - DIRECTOR, MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Shri Manoj Kumar spoke from his experience as a high ranking member of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, a position that made him an expert in the services available to children and families. He provided an overview of the various laws that governed child safety, including the recently passed Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act (POCSO) of 2012, and the organisations working for child protection, such as the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA), which the current government has streamlined in order to maximise the number of families placed with adoptive children. He also described the wide reach of the Anganwadi system, and the government’s ongoing effort to combine the Management Information Systems (MIS) portals of different departments related to child protection in order to provide a holistic response to child development concerns.

DR. AMIT SEN - DIRECTOR, FOUNDER, CHILDREN FIRST

Dr. Amit Sen, who has spent decades working with children and families, spoke about the numerous crises encountered by children and families affected by violence and abuse. To prevent a complete picture of the challenges India faces now, he described the journey of a hypothetical child who experienced emotional violence, illustrating how a lack of protection can cause children to experience low self-esteem and the development of self-destructive or anti-social behavior. Throughout, Dr. Sen pointed out how adults missed warning signs due to a lack of awareness, and how the child had no way to access services. The story also served to highlight the inter-generational transfer of violence, something Dr. Sen believes can be broken with professional counseling. Generally, Dr. Sen feels India has a strong legislative framework, but a lack of implementation and awareness, both of which need to be addressed from the local to the national level.

MAMTA BORGROYARY - CEO, FXB INDIA SURAKSHA

Ms. Borgroyary’s work is focused on interventions. Consequently, she spoke about the ways in which local, state, and national interventions can be interwoven to best serve children and families. First and foremost, she felt that child protection should be made a national priority, something that should be reflected not only in legislation, but also in budget allocations to schools and Anganwadis, particularly through ICDS. She felt that schools have the potential to be entry points in training educators, parents, and children on child protection. She was particularly optimistic about engaging School Management Committees (SMCs), which are school level committees consisting of parents, teachers, and (at certain grade levels) students who could work together to mobilise communities. She felt that pamphlets should be more involved in child protection, and discouraged the heavy reliance on “resilience programs” that, she said, normalize violence instead of preventing it. She also recommended mandating menstrual and reproductive health classes for girls and boys, as well as providing communities with the opportunity to map safe and unsafe spaces in their areas using crowdsourcing technology.

SHAMBU - EDITOR, BALAKnama

Shambhu’s words were especially powerful because he, as he told the audience, was once an “at-risk” child who had since found his voice after writing for the children’s publication Balaknama. Based on his personal experience and his reporting, he described the vulnerability of street children who fall outside a lot of systemic institutions such as CARA. In particular, he emphasised on children who ran away from home or ended up working in railway stations, places notorious for human trafficking. He pointed out that most young people believe that children’s homes and winter-shelters are provided only to children with families, so when they leave or are left by their parents, they are unaware of where to go or what to do. He also spoke about the need for more creches for parents who have no choice but to work, emphasising that when day labourers and other marginalised workers come to work, infants or toddlers at home, older siblings are often forced to leave school and engage in caregiving. These older children, as well as street children, Shambhu said, must be sought out and enrolled in school so that they have the tools to escape cycles of abuse. Finally, he said that little attention is paid to child laborers, such as those children who sell their wares at traffic lights, and that this area in particular requires immediate intervention.

IRA JOSHI – VICE PRESIDENT, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, SWI

Based on her extensive experience with children’s media, Ms. Joshi spoke about how to use multiple media platforms to raise awareness about existing child protection schemes, and to promote the socio-emotional skills necessary for coping with violence and responding to conflict peacefully. She emphasised how early intervention is the most effective, and how children’s programming can provide both children and caregivers with the language and strategies necessary to end cycles of violence. Ms. Joshi also talked about how news media must be educated about child protection issues to avoid sensationalised coverage of child-related events. In a place like India, media is especially useful for taking such ideas to scale.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PLENARY SESSION

Panelists first emphasised the need for better sensitivity among individuals tasked with implementing existing child protection policies, and to promote the socio-emotional skills necessary for coping with violence. Generally, panellists emphasised the need to invest in public systems and infrastructure. From policemen to lawyers to teachers, implementing existing child protection systems. From policemen to lawyers to teachers, panelists agreed that the adults responsible for caring for children were ill-equipped to work with children forced to cope with strong emotions and, as a result, re-traumatised children in the pursuit of seeking justice. The advisors also pointed out that some authority figures were not trained to recognise abuse, and were, at times, unwilling to believe children or file the necessary reports. These attitudes, panelists agreed, must be changed.

This was particularly troubling to respondents because they generally agreed that the system of laws and protections in place in India are quite strong. The problem, they repeatedly said, was implementation. Some of this is because of the vast amount of cases at which the laws must operate. Some of the gaps can be attributed to corruption. Still others can be attributed to inefficient systems that lead to inadequate financial or human resources. Still others were the result of a lack of awareness among families and educators, who do not necessarily have the knowledge they need to identify abuse when it is happening, or to access the services available to both stop violence and begin the healing process.

Another theme that panelists discussed was the need to raise awareness about existing systems and structures, and to help families and educators identify and prevent abuse. Related to this, panelists agreed that there needs to be a professionalisation of counseling services. More psychologists should be available for children, and these psychologists should be specifically trained to cope with childhood trauma. Counseling can benefit children as well as families.

Generally, panelists emphasised the need to invest in public systems and infrastructure. While the advisors did not specifically make this recommendation, the data in this report points to the need to coordinate efforts between various government agencies. Road and railway safety, for example, should be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Railways, and Ministry of Road Transportation and Highways. Similarly, animal safety should be brought to the notice of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Substance abuse counseling falls under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
The results of this discussion was a series of recommendations summarised by the moderator and listed in Table 6. As panelists emphasised, the recommendations are focused on strengthening implementation mechanisms for existing laws, and in investing in public spaces and systems.

Table 13: Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecosystem Level</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raise awareness about laws, institutions, and services available to children and parents, including helplines, child protection officers, and local Anganwadis.</td>
<td>Create systems of accountability for all ages, through training Anganwadi workers, teachers, and parents. Include training in early detection.</td>
<td>Focus on improving road and railway areas, and in making natural spaces available, clean, and safe.</td>
<td>Invest in infrastructures and institutions mandated by law, such as Anganwadis, creches, playgrounds, and health centres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a crowdsourced system for mapping safe and unsafe spaces.</td>
<td>Introduce anti-bullying curricula at all age levels. Train administrators in improving school climate.</td>
<td>Provide sensitivity training to individuals at all levels of the accountability system, including (but not limited to) doctors, policemen, lawyers, and educators.</td>
<td>Sensitise media so that they report more accurately and less sensationaly about child abuse and protection cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Train parents in nonviolent disciplinary techniques.</td>
<td>Train teachers in alternative, nonviolent disciplinary methods.</td>
<td>Improve child protection at key locations like traffic lights and railway stations.</td>
<td>Improve awareness about and implementation of laws pertaining to children at all levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide professional counselling services for all ages.</td>
<td>Emphasise improving access to creches and Anganwadis for daily wage workers and laborers.</td>
<td>Provide special trainings for male relatives and community members on how to peacefully interact with children.</td>
<td>Increase awareness at the panchayat level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitise media about reporting norms for stories about child abuse.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to child protection, India, like all other nations, still has far to go. However, the findings of this study, coupled with the plenary, suggest that the nation has a robust set of institutions and laws that could serve as a starting point for widespread change. This conclusion is not only hopeful, but necessary. India owes its children the chance to grow up safely and joyfully. This report is the first of many difficult, but vital, steps towards this goal.

“The big boy in school trouble the small children a lot.”
ABOUT PLAN INDIA

Plan India is a nationally registered not for profit organisation striving to advance children’s rights and equality for girls, thus creating a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children and their communities.

Since 1979, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children and young people by enabling them access to protection, quality education and healthcare services, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives.

Plan India is a member of the Plan International Federation, an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children’s rights and equality for girls. Plan International is active in more than 70 countries.