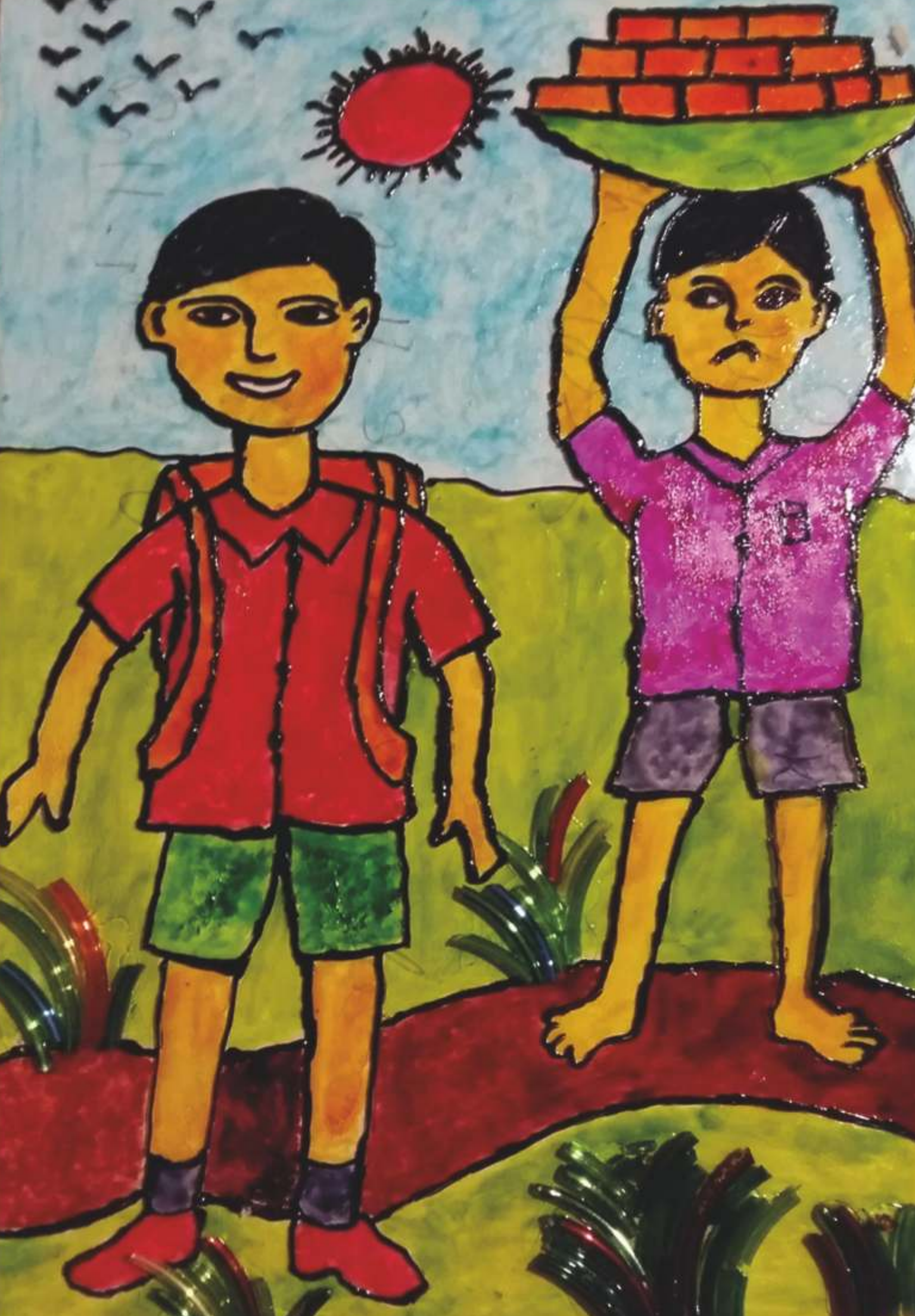


# Nat ional Conf er ence pl an f or ever y chil d

November 23-25, 2016









*Madan B. Lokur*  
*Judge*  
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## **FOREWORD**

India has a population of over 400 million children and several millions of them are living in difficult circumstances. There are a host of factors responsible for this and perhaps one generation is not enough to resolve all the problems. There are long term economic factors such as poverty and social factors related to a lack of educational opportunities. These and many other factors need to be addressed and dealt with. Nevertheless, it is imperative to put in our best efforts and attempt to remove or at least reduce the hardships faced by these children.

One such effort is being made on a large scale by Plan India as is evident from the reports of the series of conferences that it has organized over the last several months. These conferences have been attended by all stakeholders concerned with the rights of children – civil society, bureaucracy, legislators and the judiciary. As this Report of the National Conference indicates, a variety of issues have been discussed and I am sure this brainstorming will yield positive results.

The time is ripe for all of us to continue with our individual or group efforts but at the same time create partnerships and fraternities for achieving the definite goal of ensuring that children come out of the difficult circumstances that they have unwillingly been placed in – it is only then that we can make a real and visible difference. A variety of challenges have been discussed in this Report, at the grass-root level, the regional level and indeed at the national level. The ball has been set rolling by Plan India and we must keep up the momentum at all three levels.

The Sustainable Development Goals that have been set for all of us are achievable and each one of them invites us to share a platform. Is it not possible for us to choose the goal that we would like to achieve, choose the appropriate platform and make a

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- 2 -

dedicated effort to achieve the goal? Is this asking too much for the benefit of children, particularly children in difficult circumstances? I do not think so. If the goal we choose is approached with a positive and collaborative attitude and single minded purpose, we can surely make a difference. The Mahatma told us that "A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history". If we cannot alter the course of history, surely we can improve the lives of a few children in difficult circumstances.

Let us start the new year with a new dedication;

New Delhi  
22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016

*Madan Lokur*  
( Madan B. Lokur )

## Preface

At a time when the mind is numbed by staggering statistics—165 million stunted children, 3,000 children dying every day due to malnutrition, 23 million children malnourished below the age of 6 years, 18 million children living and working on the streets of urban India—it becomes imperative to talk about the lives of children in difficult circumstances.

The 'Plan for Every Child' initiative aims at creating a better future for children everywhere. The intention is to 'put the last child first'.

### **Plan for Every Child Initiative**

Plan India has been consistently advocating for the survival, protection, development and participation rights of all children, especially the most disadvantaged. It has partnered with Government bodies, statutory institutions, NGOs, children's networks, UN agencies, communities, youth and children to highlight the situation faced by the most vulnerable and marginalised among children.

The initiative focuses on the following:

- Inequalities affect children differently than adults. Vulnerable and marginalised children face sustained threats to their rights to survive and thrive and have fewer opportunities to quality education, recreation, life skills and future employment.
- For countries to progress economically and break the inter-generational impact of poverty among its most vulnerable, it is essential to address the root causes of inequality and invest in the development of all children.
- Focused and targeted interventions are essential for change to happen in the lives of the marginalised. Often, if programmes are planned for reaching out to the unreached, they tend to automatically benefit every child.
- The aggregation of voices through collaboration and the involvement of multiple agencies are crucial to ensure sustainable and effective inclusion and address the needs of marginalised children.

To understand the nuances at the field level, Plan India organised state and union territory level consultations and regional conferences, leading to the three days National Conference in New Delhi, which was attended by more than 300 people, representing child rights organisations, development practitioners, researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders from India and elsewhere, deliberating and discussing amongst themselves responses to macro-level problems faced by children.

The three I(s)—“Involve, Inform and Influence” have been integral to the programme and act as the cross-cutting feature informing the planning and execution of the conference, at each step.

The Conference Platform has facilitated the India Declaration and brought together people to provide a voice for children to address their vulnerabilities. It has been a successful effort in keeping children's issues at the centre of the development dialogue. Plan India hopes to make this an annual feature in the social development space wherein children and their issues receive the attention they need.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Plan India has organised the first National Conference on Children in Difficult Circumstances (CIDC) to mark the inception of the 'Plan for Every Child' initiative. This report reflects the vision and approach of many of us, who were brought to a common platform through the national conference, to discuss issues we closely empathise with. The conference saw eminent people from across the development sector joining us in our initiative.

### **Plan India acknowledges the contribution of eminent policy influencers for this report:**

- Honourable Justice Madan B Lokur, Supreme Court of India
- Mr. Govind Nihalani, Chair Emeritus, Plan India Governing Board
- Ms. Rathie Vinay Jha, Chairperson, Plan India Governing Board
- Ms. Surina Narula, Patron, Plan India, Philanthropist and Social Activist
- Ms. Leena Nair, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India
- Ms. Preeti Sudan, Special Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India

### **Plan India also acknowledges the contribution of our regional partner organisations that helped us in organising state consultations and regional conferences:**

1. Academy of Gandhian Studies for South and Western Regions
2. Gram Niyojan Kendra for Northern Region
3. Child in Need Institute for Eastern Region
4. Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses for North-Eastern region

A special thanks to Plan India Governing Board, staff members and partners operating in various states.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
BBBP	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
CABA	Children Affected by AIDS
CAG	Comptroller and Auditor General of India
CIDC	Children in Difficult Circumstances
CJI	Chief Justice of India
CLHIV	Children Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus
CLPRA	Child Labour (Protection and Regulation) Act
CRP	Child Rights Protection
CRPC	Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
FIR	First Information Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme
IPC	Indian Penal Code
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ITPA	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
JJ ACT	The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act of 2015
JJB	Juvenile Justice Board
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of External Affairs
NACO	National Aids Control Organisation
NCCP	National Cancer Control Programme
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NCW	National Commission for Women
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NLPCR	National Lapsable Central Pool of Resources
NPAC	National Policy on Action for Children
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PLHIV	People Living with Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV)
POCSO	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
PPTCT	Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission
RTE	Right to Education
SCPCR	State Commission for Protection for Child Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees





# The INDIA Declaration on Children

## (Plan for every child)

India is home to the world's second largest population of children, who are entitled to claim their rights and realise their full potential as they develop and grow. The constitutional commitment to every child reflects our obligations, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other international and regional human rights treaties. Over the years, significant efforts have been made to create and uphold social protective frameworks and mechanisms to ensure that Children in Difficult Circumstances (CIDC) in India reach adulthood as respected, responsible and self-reliant citizens.

However, despite all these efforts and investments, much more remains to be done. Millions of children continue to live in difficult situations, eking out their livelihood on the streets, trapped in child labour, child marriage, trafficked and lured into commercial sexual exploitation. Many more are targets of criminal activities and suffer the consequences of harmful practices, resulting in numerous and multiple deprivations of their rights to protection, education, health and other basic services.

Factors contributing towards the adverse situation for children are manifold, complex and often caused by not addressing the root causes which range from chronic and extreme poverty to inconsistent implementation and enforcement of existing laws and lack of access to services and opportunities to lack of access to services and opportunities. The judiciary has played an exceptional role but are still unable to ensure that the state reaches out to change the lives of all children in difficult circumstances. Resolving these factors will make sure that every child not only survives but also thrives and is able to contribute towards society.

Responding to the urgency of the situation of millions of CIDC and those who are deprived of optimal development, this Declaration calls upon all stakeholders, including national and state governments, Civil Society Organisations, communities, private sector, media, academia and each one of us, to join hands for intensifying our efforts to prevent and eliminate any situation in which children fail to reach their full potential. This action is our constitutional responsibility to meet our international commitments and all stakeholders are called upon to work together more effectively so as to provide a nurturing environment for CIDC in India, based on the principles of non-discrimination, development and the best interest of the child.

### Our Declaration

1. Children enjoy their own rights and are entitled to be involved in their own development and protection. Conscious efforts are needed to recognise, nourish and encourage the agency of children by everyone, including parents and families, communities and government.
2. We declare that efficient collaboration is important and we need more of it to implement the existing laws and policies consistently and immediately. While accountability should be owned by the government, it must be shared with civil society actors, media and the private sector among others. All stakeholders need to speedily mobilise their resources and coordinate better for meaningful law enforcement, while taking collective action to measure progress made in bringing lasting changes in the lives of children.
3. We declare that more focus should be placed on research for creation of an evidence base to inform and guide, planning and implementation of interventions by government agencies and civil society actors. Data collection and information management systems should be strengthened to assist the analysis of the situation of children and provide forward looking, innovative solutions based on state-driven policies and regulatory frameworks.



4. We declare that more investment in affirmative action should be made to eliminate the difficult circumstances children, especially girls, find themselves in. This is imperative to prevent the high cost of violence against children that society ends up paying for. As a large number of children remain out of safety nets, it becomes our collective responsibility to increase investments to prevent and respond to hardships stemming from several complex and interlinked causes. In other words, the collective commitment for increasing budgeting for children should be reinforced and translated into reality.
5. We declare that action-based networking should bring all stakeholders together to ensure coordination, joint accountability, effective communication and clear division of roles and responsibilities. This will improve the functioning of law enforcement and related legal services, community based actions and policy reforms.
6. We declare that promising and innovative practices that demonstrate feasibility should be scaled up. Building upon existing knowledge will further contribute to expanding safety nets to cover and involve as many children as possible.





# Executive Summary

As stated by the UN, “We must work closely together to make this year a year of global action, one that will be remembered as the dawn of a new era of sustainable development”. Plan India reaffirms its action to work on SDGs and track their development to further the cause, one that includes children’s voices being reflected through child led evaluations.

India being the youngest nation, its youth will be one of the most prevalent populations benefiting from the SDGs in the days ahead. Let us work with young people now to achieve the positive changes we want in India.

We reaffirm our commitment to continue striving to improve the situation of children in difficult circumstances. We will continue to collaborate with regions, states and all organisations that have been an integral part of this process and together we will positively impact the lives of millions of children.

Children constitute over 39% of India’s population which is the highest proportion of child population in the world. The Constitution of India mandates that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring “that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment”. India is also a signatory to various international covenants that promote human rights and make commitments to the rights of children. To keep this promise, the Government of India has, over the years, made several efforts through its

policies, laws and programmes to ensure that all children have the right to survival, protection, development and participation. Yet, there remains millions of children who continue to be denied their basic rights and entitlements owing to their situation and the inability of government structures to reach them. These are the ones identified as Children in Difficult Circumstances.

Children are in especially difficult circumstances when their basic needs for food, shelter, education, medical care, protection from discrimination and security are not met. Such children are at great risk of suffering from malnutrition, disease and possibly death. Unless their own situation changes, this condition of gross disadvantage will extend to their progeny who may suffer even greater misery and suffering.

Children in these difficult circumstances are present everywhere and yet absent from our lives. They are the ones who require care and support from society and will probably never receive it. The Plan for Every Child initiative focuses on these children, who are out there waiting for the world to act for them. The idea of putting the last child first is critical as it brings the child in focus who has been out of the reach of policies till now. It is these children who will decide our future. The global future is dependent on their well-being. If we cannot collectively ensure a life of dignity for them, then there is no point in calling our society evolved. The National Conference on Plan for Every Child was a result of this larger dream, achieved through regional and state level efforts, as highlighted below.

## Involve

- NGOs-Plan India partners, national and regional NGOs
- Government institutions at different levels
- National and global Networks and coalitions
- UN, International funding agencies
- Corporates, media, academicians, legal professionals
- Children and youth and their communities.

## inform

- Share good practices and exemplars for CIDC (global, government, NGO)
- Develop and disseminate evidence based resources for multiple stakeholders and organisations
- Consolidate, develop and disseminate information, reliable and real time data on CIDC

## influence

- Policies and programmes of national and international development to reflect and address the need of the most vulnerable
- Plan and partners, Plan International national offices and country programmes and projects
- Government and NGO reporting on the CRC and other international covenants
- Corporate investment on children’s issues
- Media interest on children’s rights





# NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PLAN FOR EVERY CHILD

estimated

40 million children  
in India are living in difficult circumstances

The Government of India has promised on various international platforms to ensure a better future for every child, but there are many hurdles in meeting this promise. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are working along with government bodies to reach out to children leading difficult lives. The National Conference became a point of confluence for government officials, CSOs, media and many other stakeholders who are committed to working for children and raising concerns about issues affecting them.

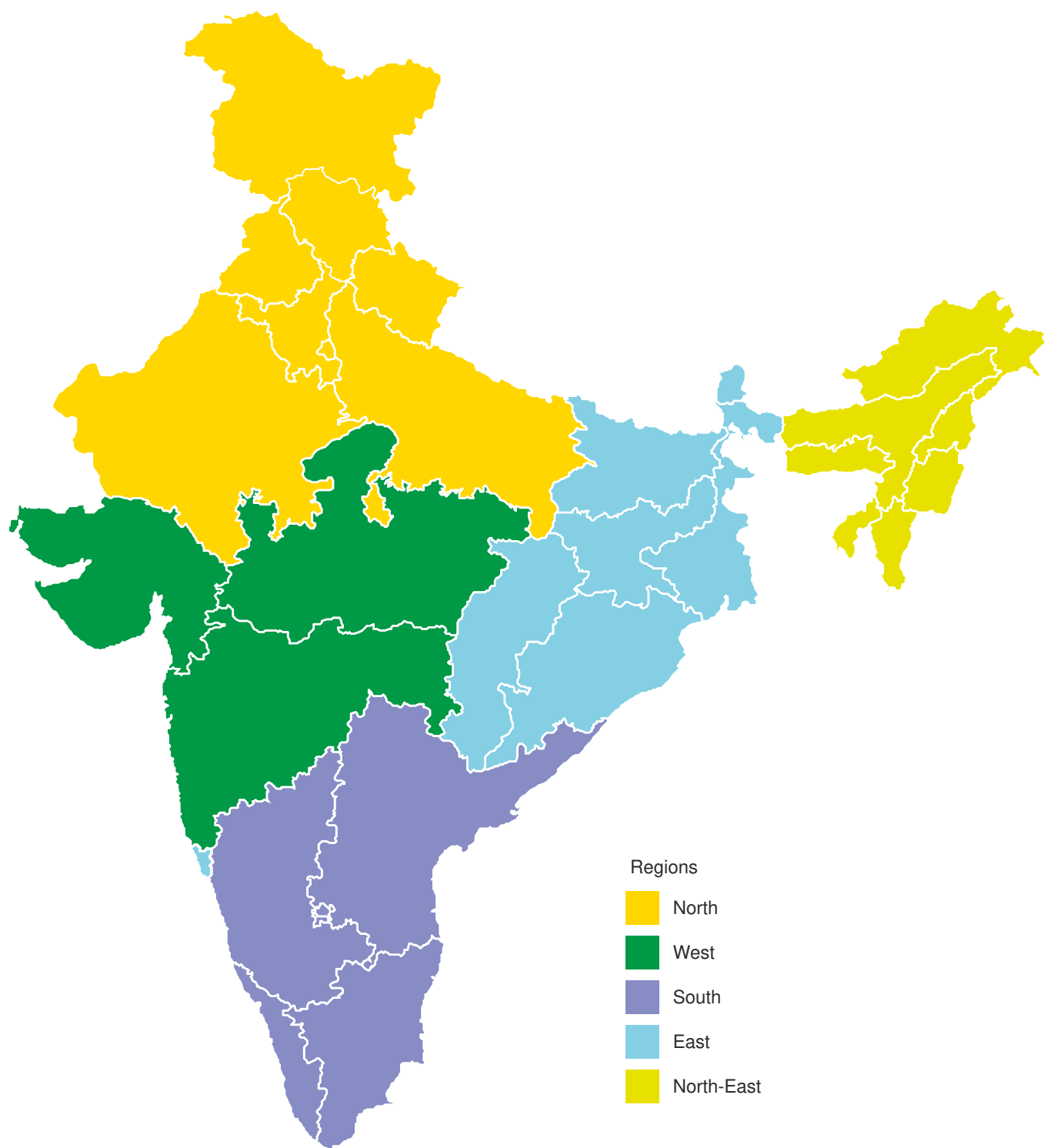
The Plan for Every Child initiative aims at creating a better future for children in India. The approach is of 'putting the last child first.' As a part of one of the world's largest community development organisations, Plan India is working to improve the lives of marginalised children, their families and communities through an approach which puts children at the centre of community development.

## Background of the National Conference

Plan India came up with a structured programme of conducting state level consultations in 28 states and 4 union territories. These states and union territories were divided into five regions: North, South, East, West and North East. Four renowned institutions were given the responsibility of organising the consultations in each of the states assigned to them. Thereafter, the institutions were to organise one regional conference with state level participants and others. Five regional conferences had been envisaged. These regional level conferences merged to become the much larger National Conference.

State level consultations were the first step where organisations, individuals, government bodies and other stakeholders came together to deliberate on issues and solutions relevant to their states. These consultations were organised across the country to get information from remote locations as well. Individuals who participated in these consultations had prior experience of working with CIDC.

states covered by the conferences



- North : J&K, HP, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, UP and Chandigarh
- West : Maharashtra, MP, Goa and Gujarat
- South : AP, Karnataka, Kerala Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and Telngana
- East : A&N Islands, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Sikkim and West Bengal
- North-East : Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh

Regional Partners

- Academy of Gandhian Studies: Southern and Western Regions
- Gram Niyojan Kendra (GNK): Northern Region
- Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM): North-Eastern Region
- CINI: Eastern Region



Once the various categories of CIDC were identified, Plan India came up with a structured programme of bringing together voices of all stakeholders from various walks of life across the country, namely CSOs, government, judiciary and media in order to bring forth a wide perspective on issues, challenges and solutions in their experience of having engaged with CIDC.

The conference again brought together child rights organisations, development practitioners, researchers, policy makers, government, judiciary and other stake holders from India and elsewhere to discuss and come up with solutions to address the larger problems faced by the children.

### DISCUSSED THEMES

Based on the findings, learnings and a prioritised list of key issues that emerged from the regional conferences, the mandate of the National Conference was to delve deeper into root causes of the CIDC. They also aimed to identify the challenges and gaps in the system from the lens of various stakeholders by revisiting solutions that are already in place. The idea was to determine what is working and what needs to be improved, bringing forth critical aspects in the system that need to be addressed.

Panel discussions by important participants - individuals with experience, both in terms of duration and depth, of having engaged with CIDC were held on these themes:

#### Policy Perspective on CIDC

##### Roles and responsibilities of:

- Government
- Law Enforcement Agencies
- Civil Society
- Media
- Corporate Houses
- Judiciary

##### Relevant issues across the five regions:

- Street and Working Children
- Children Affected by HIV/AIDS
- Child Trafficking and Child Marriage
- Children in Drug and Substance Abuse



While these four issues were discussed at length, there were separate regional breakout sessions where stakeholders belonging to the respective regions discussed the action forward plan for the top five issues concerning CIDC that emerged from every region.

Key recommendations around various aspects of the current ecosystem emerged from the sessions. These recommendations were for the government, lawmakers and law enforcing agencies, CSOs, corporates, media and the community. Speakers and participants talked about what is already working well and how to strengthen the weak areas, doing away with what is not serving its purpose. All of these and many innovative suggestions along with best practices formed the India Declaration which was released on the last day of the conference. It captured the spirit, key guidelines and commitments accepted and acknowledged by all the stakeholders.

Moreover, under every thematic area, a wide array of recommendations, suggestions, ideas and innovations to strengthen our ecosystem to support children in difficult circumstances emerged. These have been discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.

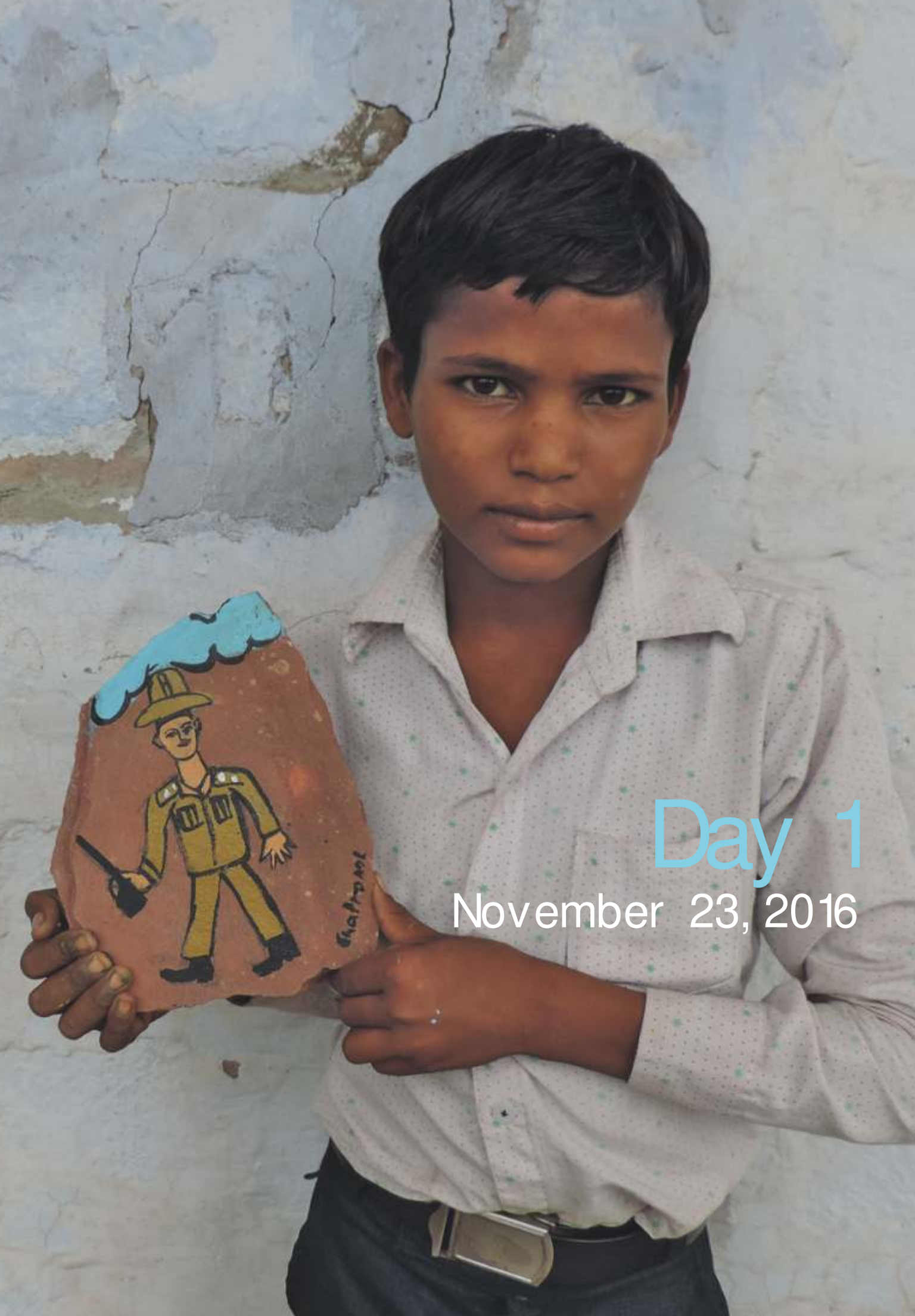
State level consultations were succeeded by regional conferences in five regions of India - North, East, West, South and North-East. The consultations gave way to larger issues which could then be discussed in various regions. The conferences were structured to involve, inform and influence issues relating to CIDC. Various stakeholders discussed ways in which they can work together to create a better tomorrow for these children.

The National Conference provided a unique opportunity to child rights organisations, development practitioners, researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders from India and elsewhere to discuss and come up with solutions to address the larger problems faced by CIDC. The stakeholders discussed the learnings from various state consultations and regional conferences and helped each other in creating strategies for a better future.

The National Conference on Plan for Every Child was held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi between November 23 - 25, 2016. It was a well-attended event, with more than 300 participants from all sections of the social development spectrum. The participants included CSOs, journalists, members of the judiciary, law enforcement officials and social development experts from India and other countries. Plan India’s partners from various states and regions of India also attended the event.

This commitment entailed a comprehensive understanding of CIDC in India, including identification, situation analysis, status of government programmes and CSOs interventions and corresponding challenges. The CIDC were thematically aligned into different categories:

- Child Labour
- Trafficked Children
- Street Children
- Child Marriage
- Children in Conflict with Law
- Children of Sex Workers
- Children with Special Needs
- Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking
- Children affected by Substance Abuse
- Children housed in Juvenile Homes/Correction Homes
- Children affected by humanitarian crisis including natural disasters and complex emergencies
- Children affected with HIV/AIDS
- Children affected by violence



Day 1

November 23, 2016



## OUTCOME

The deliberation and key recommendations which came forth in this wide and comprehensive consultation have a large purpose to serve.

- 1) Consolidate and share within Plan India the learnings, findings, commitments and declarations that have emerged to feed into the existing as well as upcoming programmes and initiatives making their operations consistent with the vision.
- 2) Share the document with the Ministry of Women and Children to inform policy making
- 3) Share the document in the public domain so that the benefits of the same do not only go to the stakeholders that

directly participated in this consultation but also to every individual or organisation working on the issues of children or engaging with them in an appropriate capacity

- 4) Formation of CIDC networks at regional and national levels. This will help in achieving the long term goals.

## National Conference on PLAN FOR EVERY CHILD

National conference on 'Plan for Every Child' was organized in Delhi from 23rd to 25th November 2016. Conference laid down an exhaustive agenda to deliberate about the different dimensions related to vulnerabilities of children.



The first day of the conference was dedicated to exploring the various issues faced by CIDC. The context of the conference was set in the inaugural session itself. Speakers focused their talk around ways to identify these issues.

Various issues which included children from all across the spectrum living a difficult life were discussed. The speakers delved much deeper into these issues and suggested solutions from their experiences.

## Inaugural Session

This session marked the formal inauguration of the conference and helped set the context for the coming three days. The speakers shared the aim and objectives of the conference.

Welcome address followed by the lighting of the lamp and inauguration of the art exhibition.

**Govind Nihalani, Chair Emeritus, Plan India Governing Board**, delivered the welcome address. He shared that the conference was one of the major initiatives taken up by Plan India which aims at reaching out to every child living in difficult circumstances and to explore solutions to the challenges faced by them. He also shared that in his long engagement with Plan India, he has witnessed the organisation bring about meaningful and sustainable changes in the lives of children in 10 different states. This current initiative will help children break free from the cycle of poverty.

An art exhibition was also inaugurated by the honourable guests. The exhibition had creative paintings and papier mâché art created by children. Several art workshops were held with children across all regions over a period of two months to meaningfully engage with them and bring forth their ambitions, fears and desires through art. This helped in preparing them to realise their potential and unleash their creativity. The children used visual narratives to bring forth their stories.

## Setting the Context on CIDC

**Rathi Vinay Jha, Chair, Plan India Governing Board**, stated in her address that the conference is not just about CIDC, the most vulnerable section of children in society, but also children who will be the future citizens of the country. It is not just about

highlighting their circumstances but also what CSOs, governments and society can do for them.

She quoted Nelson Mandela, “There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.” She asked everybody to dream bigger than what we all think we can do.

She said that it is a revolutionary step to try to reach out to each and every child in extreme poverty and without access to basic early childhood care. Apart from implementation of the programmes, there needs to be a dialogue between various organisations with similar mandates to act as a united force for children with such needs and specific vulnerabilities. She informed the audience that the process of consultation began in January 2016. During the consultations, 500 CSO partners, local activists, donors and government functionaries came together to contribute to the process. There is a wealth of information from all deliberations and the broad vision is that the conversations should not stay within the confines of the conference rooms. It is important that the documents of information that will emerge shall be shared with everyone from the sector.

## Sharing Outcomes from Regional Consultations

**Bhagyashri Dengle, Executive Director, Plan India**, shared the outcomes from the state consultations and regional conferences. She stressed that the work done by Plan India towards CIDC ‘is just not a token, but a signal of being committed.’

Plan India’s mandate is to reach out to two million children directly and to another five million children through advocacy. 39% of the total population of India is children and there will be focused work with children for the next 10 years. The Government of India has also put forth the mandate that places ‘last child first’.

There is not enough data available on CIDC. There is a need to create informed policies and programmes. CSOs can come together with their views, recommendations and disseminate information to create more awareness about their issues. Plan India will be taking forward this initiative over the long haul.

## Message from Anne-Birgitte Albrectsen, CEO, Plan International

In a video message, Anne-Birgitte Albrectsen congratulated and welcomed everybody participating in the conference. She further said that Plan International is dedicated to ensuring that children all over the world have their rights fulfilled. Plan International has just adopted a new global strategy with the ambition of reaching out to 100 million girls so that they can learn, lead, take their own decisions and thrive. Everybody attending the conference also has personal commitments towards effecting a real change in the lives of the deprived children. She said that together we all can change the world for childhood.

## Global Networks on CIDC: Lessons for India



**Surina Narula, Patron, Plan India**, in her address, shared that a global network on CIDC is close to her heart. She remembered the times when there were no organisations working for the betterment of street children. The absence of a network to learn and understand children living on the streets also prompted her to be on the streets and do her own research. She created a consortium of street children 25 years ago, and more and more organisations joined this initiative. The consortium went knocking on the doors of the United Nations with a network of five organisations and asked for a convention on the rights of street children. Due to the initiative of the consortium, the General Comment on Street Children was formed. She added that while the General Comment has a lot to say, it is going to be of little use unless Plan and similar organisations work upon those observations. CSOs need to talk to the government along with networks and friends all over the world about street children.

She stressed that street children are not covered by most government plans. A network is important which works tirelessly to ensure that they are visible to everyone working towards the mitigation of their misery.

The other important point is to learn from each other and adopt the best practices as and when an organisation gets exposed to a new idea or

practice which is already working well. She emphasised this need as India has the highest number of street children in the world. Instead of everyone wanting to do their own thing and reinventing the wheel, a network needs to be built where we can learn and adopt from each other.

## Corporate-Civil Society Partnership for CIDC: A Technology Perspective



**Manoj Dawane, Vice President and Head - Technology, Government and Industry Relations and Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility, Ericsson**, emphasised the need to leverage technology to bring education to remote locations. He spoke of the six 'I' network – Identify, Inform, Interdependent, Independent, Implement and Intent. All of these, when executed well, will help the 7th 'I' - India.

In his address, he also said that it is important to use everyday technology to ensure that education is accessible to everyone. 'Technology for good' has the potential to touch the lives of people across the country. He suggested that what we all require is proper technological support to be able to impact the lives of people we seek to empower, acknowledging that the resources for creating such an environment are available. He emphasised the need to divert our energy in ensuring that it happens and laid down the steps to effect impact through technology. First, children who need our help must be identified. Then, information about these children is needed which can be regularly tracked by the government.

He added that interdependence will be a crucial measure towards helping children. For instance, in cases where schools are in far off locations, girls can commute together. In such locations, wireless technology can also be used for education. 20 education centres can be linked through wireless communication networks providing children access to education. In the past, similar networks have been created for women living in slums. He stressed that ultimately, when these children are educated and become independent, it will add to the growth of the national GDP in the long run. The strategy that needs to be followed is to 'teach fishing' to people rather than 'provide fish' to them. NITI Aayog is also following a Fishing vs. Fish strategy for people who have ideas to create sustainable establishments.

He also said that all the first four I's will fail if we slip on implementation of the fifth 'I' -



Implementation, he said, technology helps to reach the last child. Poor implementation will not only waste critical resources but will also take us backwards. He concluded by stating that the sixth and most important 'I' is intent. There needs to be a meaningful and honest intent towards providing access of resources to children in distress.

## SDGs and CIDC in a Global Context



**Yasmeen Muhamad Shariff, UN Working Group Member**, shared that the United Nations has worked towards creating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for its 2030 agenda, successor to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). There are 17 global goals and 169 targets between them. All 193 member states and global CSOs have contributed in the resolution. It is a universal set of goals which have been adopted by all the member states to be included in all their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years. The spirit of SDGs reflects the 'future we want to see'. She emphasised that there cannot be any Plan B since there is no Planet B when we are talking about such critical issues.

Earlier the MDGs were the focal point in the framework of policies, but they were somewhat narrow and there was a need for something new like the SDGs. The new 2030 agenda has a Universal Child Rights Agenda and can throw new light on the issues. Nine out of the 17 goals and 48 targets of the SDGs are highly relevant to distressed children, including two dedicated goals to fight discrimination.

It is important that the media shows more sensitivity around reporting on issues like child abuse and atrocities against women. It must highlight not just the plight, but also motivational news.

She also said that goals cannot be achieved unless children live without fear. It is critical to inculcate the culture of fearlessness among the children. Physical violence is the most important concern which must be dealt with in all seriousness. Though there are some statistics around violence against girls, there is no data relating to violence against boys. This will be a challenge for stakeholders in the field.



## Key note address -

Preeti Sudan, Special Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development

**Preeti Sudan** shared the Government's perspective on the issue by sharing a few hard hitting facts which brought forth the gravity of the situation. 39% of India's population is children, of which 29% are in the age group of 0-5 years. Every year, 27 million children are born, out of which two million don't survive beyond the age of 5 years. Two million children live in hunger. 40% of the children who survive are malnourished.

She also threw light on the various existing laws, programmes and resources in the country working for the betterment of lives of children.

**Legislative Framework:** There is a legislative network in place. The Constitution of India , upholds many safeguards for children including the JJ and POCSO Acts. While the legislative framework is quite robust, it is the implementation which is weak hence there is a need to strengthen the interventions.

**Role of technology:** Information and Communication Technology have made big strides, yet have not been used for child protection. This technology must be used to monitor the health of children.

There is a lack of state support systems when it comes to children. There is also a lack of manpower in institutional care homes. The care homes for children do not have manpower needed to perform properly. This is not a matter of priority for various governments. She emphasised that each child needs a home and should find a safe one. Governments must act to ensure this.

India's CSR has been declining since 1976. She stressed that we must acknowledge this as an embarrassment for the country. Pre-birth/post-birth discrimination is an empowerment issue and active cooperation

is required from the CSOs in order to be able to implement this.

She shared the positive work done by the government relating to children and that each state has a Child helpline desk – 1098, which is a toll free number. There is also a child tracking programme called 'Khoya Paya', a citizen centric initiative where anyone can upload pictures of a child you know to have been lost or been found anywhere. She shared that NCPCR has an online complaint box for any issue related to children.

There are a lot of institutions which have been working with children, but are not registered. There is a need to look at their operations.

The 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme by the Government of India has been very effective in many rural areas. There have been a lot of local innovations in various villages in the area of schemes which need to be shared on a wider scale so that people in other regions can also use them for better results. The Facebook page of the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign also shares resource materials for citizens and organisations and to sensitise the population.

She said that it is also important that the media report about children more seriously. Instead of sensational news, there needs to be more sensitive news. The ministry has met journalists in the past to take this issue forward.

She stressed that there is no lack or dearth of intent in this country but there is a need to bring together all the resources that are available, whether government, judicial or CSOs and create a repository of resources.

Media reporting about children become more serious. Instead of sensational news, we need more sensitive news

# Plenary Session 1:

## Policy Perspective on CIDC

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Chair :

Parul Soni,

Global Managing Partner ,  
Thinkthrough Consulting

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### Speakers

- Mohammad Asif, Director, Programme Implementation, Plan India
- Pradeep Narayanan, Director, Programme Strategy and Policy, Plan India
- Sanjoy Roy, Founder Trustee, Salaam Baalak Trust
- Ela Mukherjee, Artist
- Abhishek Ranjan, Global Sustainability Head, Briolio
- Stuti Narain Kacker, Chairperson NCPCR, Government of India

The session focused on delving into and understanding various policies that are available for children. SDGs are global guidelines which can help achieve not only global goals, but various goals set by India. There are various policies at work to ensure that children lead a life without discrimination. Even though there are well written guidelines, the reality is very different. It is important to work tirelessly, keeping in mind the existing policy guidelines and goals which will eventually help change things around.

The session helped in better understanding of the situation faced by the CIDC.



## SDGs and CIDC:

### India's Commitment

### towards Achieving SDGs



#### Mohammad Asif and Pradeep Narayanan

presented their views on India's commitment towards achieving SDGs. It is important to understand that India's role in achieving SDGs is critical to the global achievement targets.

Mohammad Asif spoke of work within Plan India for CIDC. He said there are 17 global goals in the 2030 agenda and quite a few of them are directly linked to children. The children will be evaluating the world in 2030, there is a need for a child centric approach and therefore, there is resonance in all the goals.

According to the 2011 census, out of a total 1,200 million population, about 480 million are children. Of this, a substantial number belong to the CIDC category and a subset of this number is children in street labour, children in areas where development has not reached, children stigmatised by virtue of family and community context, exploitative, cultural and social norms, child marriages, female genital mutilations, HIV/AIDS, cancer, among others.

Asif stressed that in 2030 our success will be measured by the children of today. At a time when one in every three children in India lives in difficult circumstances, it becomes critical for us to achieve the target for a better tomorrow. CIDC is a moving target for public policy and development.

Pradeep Narayanan presented on the magnitude of the problem, wherein his presentation showed how in the 2011 census, the national figures for CIDC is dipping, but there are states where the numbers are on a rise.

He also shared that though the Government of India has signed up for the UN's Agenda 2030, there is no exact match for CIDC with the 17 global goals. UN has set a process to track SDGs which can be applied to schemes and other indicators and NITI Aayog is working on it. BBBP has certain guidelines but there are very few indicators elsewhere that can help us provide an accurate projection. Indicators from national level, state level and district level must be built to understand our position concerning the SDGs and viz-a-viz. The government must be supported in this extremely critical endeavour by providing required and apt support in collecting, analysing and disseminating the data for the benefit of end users. In his critical assessment, Pradeep Narayanan stated that as per the present data, most of the

targets are unachievable for India till 2030. He shared data relating to child marriage in India where 41% males and 61% female are married before the legal age. The bigger challenge is that there is no accurate data and numbers for trafficking and other related issues faced by CIDC.

## Judicial and Government

### Perspective on CIDC



In his address, **Sanjoy Roy** stated that the figures presented by Pradeep Narayanan were depressing. He said that there are many laws in place to address the needs of children but they require to be looked at in detail.

Sanjoy Roy, from his experiences at Salaam Baalak Trust, shared that the insecurity of children on the street is real. Governments have been opposed to child rights issues. He critically examined the Child Labour Act. With the new age aspect in the act, children over 14 years of age can engage in the family business. Thus, the carpet and many other industries are thriving with legalised 'child labour'. Measures like these are halting the progress. The statistics are demotivating and dark and it seems that children have been failed, making it imperative to group together and urge the government to hear the voice of these children.

He even shared that CWC members are not sensitised about the law and the needs of the child. The Act commands that every child should be sent home. But, is that the best thing to do? What if the abuse began at home? If the children are sent home, there is no process by which children's condition can be tracked.

Sanjoy Roy stressed the need for a proper budget for children. The budget allocated for the children today needs to be doubled. There is need to expedite the process of disbursement of funds which usually happens a year and a half after presenting the budget.

The idea is to address difficult issues, as there are no simple solutions on account of limited data. Budgets cannot be reduced for education and health care. What is needed are disruptive ideas. There is also the need to come together and find solutions, communicate effectively and as a group, fight budget cuts in governments. This is because, we owe children their childhood so that they can succeed in life. He said, "It is important to form a task force to take these suggestions forward and let not keep it as sharing".



## Voices of Children: Expression through Art

**Ela Mukherjee** shared the importance of engaging with children through creativity. In her presentation 'Voices of Children', she shared photographs of children living in difficult circumstances who have expressed their lives through art. She shared that in the art workshops, eight to ten hours were spent every day with the children across various regions for two months. They bought local and inexpensive materials and helped the children express their dreams, desires, hopes, challenges and fears through visual media.

From her experience of working with children, she shared how children from different regions have different kinds of insecurities. For instance, children in the North-East portrayed issues like insurgency in their art work. Children from across the region talked about violence, love, care, education - things they have missed or witnessed in their lives.

As part of the Plan for Every Child initiative, art workshops were conducted in Manipur, Pune, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Hyderabad. She conducted workshops on creating artwork using the technique of paper mâché. The amazing artworks by these children were also exhibited at the National Conference.





## Corporate Perspective on working with CIDC



**Abhishek Ranjan** shared that there is one entity that is 'children' and then, there are CIDC. The needs of the latter group are very different. There problems need to be looked into as distinct from problems of the larger group of children. These children don't have a voice or a human face. It is important to understand that CIDC is a post-geo political entity.

He further shared that his organisation, Briolio, has a two-way approach. As a corporate house, he asserts that his vendors, suppliers comply with priorities of the Child Labour Act, utilising CSR funds to ensure child rights are effectively upheld. There needs to be a lot more education and capacity building within the corporates to know more about the lives of CIDC. The present focus is more on reaching numbers rather than making a real impact. In such situations, only the surface is being scratched and there is no real impact. He also stressed that there is too much restriction on funding and limited freedom to innovate around the same. There is a whole coalition missing and the need of the hour is a consortium of corporations to collaborate, learn and share.

## National Policy for Children 2015 with Specific Focus on CIDC



**Stuti Narain Kacker**, Chair Person, National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), from her experience reiterated that we need to get onto one platform and speak in a single voice. Children are everywhere, yet invisible. They need to be made visible by communicating with policy makers and administrators and invade their mind-space to provide for emotional and parental care of the children.

There are children who suffer brutalities at the hands of their own families and communities and run away from such difficult homes. A family is the first place where the child dwells and a cogent plan of action for their basic rights within the family is needed. Focus needs to be placed on crimes inside families and on good parenting.

She said that everyone talks about JJ Act and other related laws, but nobody talks about child rights. There is a need to recognise that children

have been denied their rights which is unacceptable.

She asked a critical question that if there is a Right to Education in the country, how are so many children still on the streets? She insisted that this needs critical attention and cannot be accepted as 'normal'. She implored the need to work together to achieve the SDGs and other related goals so that every child leads a dignified life.

She also shared that the NCPCR is in the process of making state goals and estimates because action takes place in states. The message needs to be conveyed to the state government for a better tomorrow.

## Concurrent Sessions: Challenges and Responses to CIDC



The concurrent sessions focused on the challenges children and stakeholders face and the responses they have developed over the years. The idea behind these sessions was to bring the people working in specific areas together and have them deliberate on issues they face and the solutions they have found which can be used by others.

These sessions provided an opportunity for the audience to interact more closely with the speakers and form informed opinions about the issues under discussion.

The session began with opening remarks from Rasa Sekulovic, chairperson for the session. He said that not all children in the street are working children. They are on the streets for several reasons. Similarly, not all the working children are street children. This distinction was important to take the session forward. He stressed that it is not important to repeat the data as everybody present was well aware about the real situation. It was more important to talk about issues and



## Closing remarks by the chair

The chair, **Parul Soni**, said that there is a challenging but important goal to achieve by 2030, which may appear difficult at this time but can be collectively achieved. There is no denying the fact that there are many laws for children, and if implemented well, most of the goals can be achieved.

He also said that implementation is crucial and cannot be taken for granted. Vulnerable and marginalised children face sustained threats to their rights to survive and thrive and have fewer opportunities to quality education, recreation, life skill and future employment.

Focused and targeted interventions are essential for change to happen in the lives of the most marginalised. Often, if programmes

are planned for the hardest-to-reach, they tend to automatically benefit every child. Engaging with children through art and creativity is the best way to bring them out of the vicious cycle of violence and abuse.

Finally he stated, in order for countries to progress economically and break the inter-generational impact of poverty among its most vulnerable, it is essential to address the root causes of inequality and invest in the development of all children especially those in the most difficult of circumstances. The aggregation of voices through collaboration and the involvement of multiple agencies are crucial to ensure sustainable and effective inclusion and address the needs of the children.



# Street and Working Children

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Chair :

Rasa Sekulovic,

Regional Head of Child Protection,  
Plan International Asia Regional Office

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Speakers

- P. Lakshapathi, Founder and Executive Director, Association for Promoting Social Action
  - Nalini Gangadharan, Executive Chairperson, CAP Foundation
  - Sanjay Gupta, Managing Trustee and Director, Chetna
  - Bharti Sharma, Former Chairperson, CWC
  - Tushar Anchal, Technical Advisor - Child Protection, Plan India
  - Prabhat Kumar, National Thematic Manager - Child Protection, Save the Children India
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challenges. India has the largest numbers of street children in the world, estimated by UNICEF in 2000 to be around 18 million. There are an estimated 37,059 children who live on the streets of Mumbai, according to the first ever census of street children conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Most children come from migrant families who live in urban deprived areas, such as illegal settlements, along the railway lines, drainage canals and on the streets.

P. Lakshapathi in his presentation, shared that 19% of the world's population of children lives in India and highest number of child labourers. 40% of people in every city live in slums and fall into this category of vulnerability.

He elaborated on the rights given to a child under the Constitution and then spoke of the Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act of 1986 amended in 2006, 2008 and 2015. He said that in spite of there being a law and so many amended versions, the rate of conviction under this law is very low and the acquittal rate is high because the employers are very powerful.

He added that the laws are good but the implementation is very poor. The judiciary, police and labour departments have worked in unison to tackle the issue. The conviction is low primarily because of the lack of evidence (no attendance and wage record) and the amount of time taken by the judiciary to give justice is too long. He cited the example of a case in Karnataka, where it took 10 years to get a judicial decision but by that time all the children had gone back to their respective homes. There is a need to immediately cancel the license of any employer that comes under the radar.

There is buck-passing between the district court, labour department and police as the issue of child labour has not been prioritised by anyone. Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1986, Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act, 1986, JJ and POCSO Act all talk about the rescue, rehabilitation and repatriation of trafficked children. He made a strong case for judiciary and administrative functionaries be sensitised.

Rasa shared his critical observation that under ICPS, INR 2,000 is guaranteed for 100 children rescued and under NCCP, INR 150 is guaranteed. This is certainly not enough. Under the provisions of various child protection acts, crores and crores of rupees are being accumulated in every district office, appropriate solutions have not designed and funds have not been utilised. It can be used judiciously for more effective rehabilitation. There is no comprehensive approach and there is no

convergence between various laws and bodies. All the concerned departments are working in isolation. He stressed that more than anything else, we need convergence of all inter connected departments.

Nalini Gangadharan said, "In all these years we have moved an inch and slipped a mile." In the year 1998-99, children were being rescued from factories, all of which is redundant now in the wake of the last amendment to the Child Labour Act.

Based on her experience, she shared that unless we understand who these CIDC are and what their aspirations are, we will always fail, no matter what programme is designed to engage with them. She said "Every child is a story in his/her own right, there is no way to get into their minds unless the socio, economic, political circumstances they grew up are understood".

She also shared her observation that there is resistance on the part of organisations and society to help these children reintegrate. For young people beyond 18 years, employers would not hire victims of trafficking or surrendered militants.

From her address, it was concluded that more than anything else, strengthened collaboration between stakeholders is needed, involving parents, grandparents, duty bearers, police department, panchayats and local governance bodies, judiciary and the Government.

Sanjay Gupta spoke about what is not going in favour of the fight for child rights. The mind set of society and all stakeholders involved is crucial. Based on his experience, he shared that at the time of rescue of a child, there are lots of 'why' from every possible direction, asking the same question 'Why did the child run?', but this question is rhetorical at best.

He also shared that there are many children who pick up dead bodies from the railway tracks. They pick rags in the morning from Gazipur Mandi and bribe the guards there. He also shared some success stories especially about Chandni, who now works with Birla Sun Life.

He added that, when it comes to raising our own children, we take care of them till the age of 18, but for children facing vulnerabilities, we refer to time period laid down in schemes. For e.g. in Child Labour Act, we are only concerned till age of 14 years. He made a case for not only investing financial resources for schemes but also for effective implementation of existing laws.

Bharti Sharma said that there is a dichotomy in all regarding who is a child. In terms of the laws and

statutes at the central or state level, the terms 'child' and 'adult' have not been defined appropriately. It is inconvenient to understand the child from 'within'. She expressed the need for society to be human and regretted the fact that funding mandates decide programmes for children ignoring the need to understand the child from within.

She questioned that, while we suppose families to be the best place for children, how safe is it for them? She defined the current guidelines of rescuing children as at best 'restorative' and not 'rehabilitative'.

The other issue she spoke about is the institutionalisation of children, a child never wants to go to an institution and even if that has to be done, it is not known who takes care of or what happens to someone after the age of 18 years. She further stated that judiciary, law enforcement agencies have knowledge but their attitude towards children needs to change.

Tushar Anchal said that we had perceived the JJ Act, 2000 as a magical wand. People believed that every child will go home. However, he insisted that it is not known how many child labourers are there, the highest numbers of them being in the age group of 14-18 years.

He insisted that there is a need to understand the functional, social and economic problems faced by children belonging to different categories. There are so many other problems on the street. He stressed the need to address these issues collectively.

He shared his observation that CWCs lacked empathy. He further reiterated neither the CWC nor the ICPS has the categorical responsibility for the process of rehabilitation and psychological support to the child.

He mentioned that there are no homes catering to special children and added that rehabilitation and integration is not a one-time act. There is a need to form strong multi-sectoral frameworks for the same. He also stressed the need of adequate early childhood care programmes for younger children.

Prabhat Kumar said that there are two kinds of children on the street - working children and children of families living on the street. He shared that when they spoke with children on the street, less than 5% had ever heard of an NGO or knew about any government body they could reach out to.

He mentioned only 0.5% of children received any kind of services. More than 88% did not have any kind of identity proof. Interestingly, Prabhat told us, the children also shared that they felt safer in the night than in the day as during the day, there are so many people and law enforcement agencies on the road.

Prabhat added that most of the CSOs only cater to children aged between 6-14 years. Children who are less than 6 years and more than 14 years have no access to care. He emphasised the need on the part of the Government of India to include street children in their care programmes. Less than 0.5% children on the street have access to any kind of services, so there is a need to make a policy framework that fits these children.

KS Sachdeva chaired the session and described the conference as a landmark platform where redefining of the context of children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS, as those in difficult circumstances. The focus on CABA has been dwindling in the face of funding cuts. The aim has to be that of reintegrating these children into routine, mainstream programmes. To discuss this issue further, a panel of eminent experts presented their views on the issue.

## Closing remarks by the chair

**Rasa Sekulovic** said there are several factors that contribute to the incidence of children's engagement in labour and how children are forced to be connected with the streets. He said that poverty is typically seen as the key underlying cause. Despite the law prohibiting and banning child labour, there has been no significant decline in child labour and children continue to contribute to the family income and share the significant work load to improve the economic condition of their family, but sometimes the poor economic condition of the family is not the real cause for their being on the streets. Children live and work on the streets because their families, communities and the government are unable to fulfil their duties of care and protection.

He said that though there are very good laws, it is evident that they have not been implemented well. CSOs alone cannot function to bring in much needed changes. The police, judiciary and government agencies have to be sensitised enough to bring about effective change. We all need to understand who CIDC are. Once CIDC have been identified, organisations will be able to contribute in a better manner.

He stressed on the need to change how society thinks about children and CIDC in order to bring in larger acceptance of distressed children in society. This, he believes, is going to be the most critical challenge for stakeholders working to help the CIDC. The role of the family, he added, is extremely important. He said that the child needed to feel safe in the family which in turn determined the personality of the child. He said that there needs to be a policy framework that caters to the CIDC.





# Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

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Chair :

**K.S Sachdeva,**

Deputy Director General  
(Basic Service Division, STI and Research),  
National AIDS Control Organisation

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## Speakers

- Troy Cunningham, Director OVC Social Protection Project, Karnataka Health Promotion Trust
  - Lokanath Mishra, Association for Rural Uplift and National Allegiance, Odisha
  - Huidrom Rosenara, Associate Director, Alliance India
  - Naresh Chandra Yadav, Director, Uttar Pradesh Welfare for People Living with HIV/AIDS Society
  - Sangeeta Kaul, Project Management Specialist, USAID
  - Rochana Mitra, Project Director, Project Ahana, Plan India
-



6.54% of the estimated 2.1 million PLHIV are children below the age of 15 years  
125,911 children registered in HIV care  
80,634 are active in HIV care, 55,606 children are on ART  
2,782 children are eligible for initiating ART, but it has not yet started

Shared by Huidrom Rosenara in her presentation

In his presentation, Troy Cunningham shared that the situation of children living with HIV/AIDS has worsened. There has been an increase of 0.8% since 2000 in the number of deaths by HIV/AIDS. Though cases of new infections in adults have come down, it has increased in children. This only means that we are seeing a sad scenario for the CABA.

The impact of HIV/AIDS is severe on children. Apart from health and education, they face problems in social welfare and social protection. Children have to face insensitive teachers in school. Broken families lead to loss of childhood and school dropout rates have increased due to this.

It has been suggested that there should be a simplification of documentation which makes children eligible for welfare. In Maharashtra, as part of the Bal Sangopan Scheme, District Collectors have issued a circular to reduce 14 documents to eight for schemes related to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and widows who could be described as PLHIV. Such measures, he felt, could certainly be incorporated into the other schemes. He mentioned that the OVC Coordination Committees in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh meet every quarter to review and approve schemes for OVCs and their families. In Maharashtra, the Single Window System at the Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) centres has been very helpful. It is a single point for issuing and collecting applications for schemes across line departments.

There are many new cash transfer schemes which have been launched for CABA. Karnataka started the schemes much ahead of other states. If a child is in foster care in Karnataka, they receive INR 750 every month for their personal care. If the child lives with their parents, they receive a grant of INR 650 every month. Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have started new cash transfer schemes for providing financial assistance for nutrition and education to CABA.

Loknath Mishra shared his experience from the Ganjam district in Odisha. He started his address by saying that before one starts working for them, they need to know exactly who these children with HIV/AIDS are. The majority of children infected with HIV get the infection from their mother. These children are born to parents infected by HIV. There are also children who got infected through sexual transmission due to early marriage and sexual abuse. Children can be infected in medical and health care facilities, as well, during blood transfusions.

In his address, Loknath Mishra said that a person with HIV dies much before their death. The extent of vulnerability for children is enormous. He said that the child of a sex worker is likely more vulnerable than others. Children are susceptible to diseases when they are in social and economic distress.

He spoke about the challenges in various forms which surround children living with HIV/AIDS. The predominant challenge is that of social acceptance. Various factors exhaust CABA psychologically. He has observed that children face stigmas and discrimination at health care facilities as well. If the child is living with HIV/AIDS, their right to their properties is also in jeopardy.

He advised that it was important to reposition and restructure the HIV programme. He implored the audience to explore the provision of adequate services, resources and partnership to support the programme. He spoke about the inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and inter-stakeholder convergence. He said that even the programme to prevent PPTCT, the greatest HIV medical success, needed amplification. This, he felt, could be the entry point for HIV prevention and care programmes in future.

Huidrom Rosenara, in her presentation, shared that 6.54% of the estimated 2.1 million PLHIV are children below the age of 15 years. A total of 125,911 children have been registered in HIV care. While 80,634 are active in HIV care, 55,606 children are on ART. 2,782 children are eligible for initiating ART, but it has not yet started.

She shared Alliance India's experience with CABA. She shared about Children Living with HIV/AIDS and Happiness to All (CHAHA), a cost effective programme to reach out to children. It is a child-centred care and support programme for families and communities. She said that though reaching out to such families is good, yet it is difficult for organisations to sustain the happiness of these families. They can help connect families to various schemes by the government.

The present programme by Alliance India, Vihaan Care and Support Program, aims to ensure access of care and support services to 1.2 million PLHIV in 32 states and territories. The programme has already reached out to 999,667 clients; 82% of total PLHIV registered at ART centres. They are receiving care and support from the programme. This includes 74,811 CLHIV (less than 18 years of age).

She stressed that the fund allocation for CABA is insufficient, added funding at every level could help ensure that programmes are implemented better.



The government should also have concrete policies for CABA to ensure budget allocation for specific interventions.

Naresh Chandra Yadav shared his experience of living with the HIV virus for 13 years. In his experience, things have changed for the better in these 13 years. Earlier, there was no support system for PLHIV. Taboos associated with HIV/AIDS has also reduced due to many success stories in India.

In his address, he said that in order to save children affected by HIV, work to save the parents is a must. A child is safe with its parents. He felt that though governments try to help, at many times CSOs do not follow up on the schemes. The government has enunciated many schemes for CABA and PLHIV, but CSOs have failed in mobilising people. This is a challenge which relevant people along with the CSOs need to address. He also said that NACO has been extremely helpful, but at times there have been instances of poor management.

He felt that, at times, the issues are being lost in the numbers. The trend of responding to HIV/AIDS has been positive but focus needs to shift beyond the projects. He emphasised that the taboo about HIV patients has come down, but in order to save the children, the parents' need to be saved first. This, he felt, needs to be the message.

Sangeeta Kaul started her talk by saying that 5.7% of global HIV burden is in India. 138,000 HIV positive children live in India, of which 54,900 are on ART. There are many CABA related issues that she thought needed to be addressed.

There has to be continued medical care and proper nutrition for children. These things are difficult to ensure for families living in poverty. There is also a need to address the psychological distress which children in these circumstances (affected by HIV/AIDS) undergo. Apart from all these, society neglects children because of the stigma these diseases bring about. The affected children face discrimination. In such cases, school dropout rates have gone up. One of the reasons is because children have to go out to take the ART medicine which prevents them from concentrating properly on their education.

She shared from her experience that children are best cared for in their own homes and communities. It is important to respect and uphold a child's rights, especially the right to participate in decision making. Emotional and physical needs of children need to be addressed as well.

USAID's Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) project is aimed at reaching out to children who do not have access to critical help like that of family and community. This project has reached out to more than 33,000 children affected by AIDS in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Essential components of child care are quality paediatric treatment. She said it is important to focus on care and support.

Rochana Mitra spoke about Plan India's Project Ahana. It gave a sneak peek into what Plan India has been doing for the past 20 years and how it culminated into Project Ahana. Plan India's programme has been conceptualised as per Plan International's 'Circle of Hope' model for dealing with issues of children.

She shared that Plan India's first HIV/AIDS activity was started in 2002. Plan India felt the need to raise awareness and communicate on HIV with children living in difficult circumstances. In 2004, a comic book on HIV/AIDS Awareness Package (HAAP) kit was developed. The HAAP kit was used by NACO, State AIDS Prevention and Control Societies (SACS), Ministry of Education (MoE) and various NGOs. The comic book was also presented with the Manthan Award.

From 2005 to 2014, Plan India conducted a community based prevention of child trafficking and HIV/AIDS in ten high prevalence districts of Andhra Pradesh. It directly helped 5,520 adolescents and children benefit from the programme. In 2008, a study was conducted on 'Vulnerability of HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care Continuum for Women and Children of IDUs in Northeast India and Punjab' where 60 participating organisations deliberated. Plan India also implemented integrated PPTCT and livelihood support services of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLHA) in three districts—Mau (UP), Pune (Maharashtra) and Ganjam (Odisha) from 2009 to 2015. In 2012, they implemented the CABA programme in Bihar and Jharkhand and provided care, treatment and support services to 372 children.

The session started with Sonali Khan speaking about the fact that in the eastern and western regions of India, early marriage is rooted in the normalisation of violence. Violence, as a mechanism of control is justified and as the intensity of violence increases, so does the justification around the same and there are no questions asked.

Komal Ganotra shared that when it comes to trafficking, the main target age group is 15-18

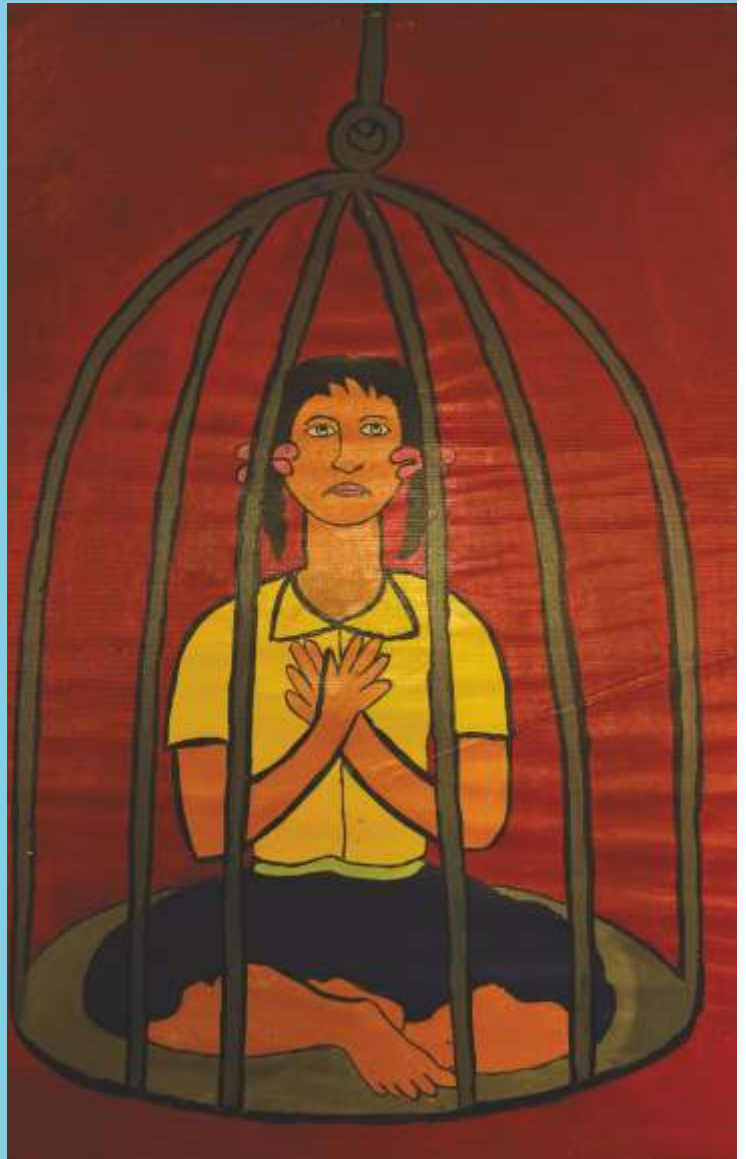
## Closing remarks by the chair

**KS Sachdeva** summed up the discussion by sharing the major points of action. Children affected by HIV and AIDS face multiple vulnerabilities—loss of parents to the ‘disease’, low food security and malnourishment, depletion of asset base and livelihood opportunities and dropping out of school to supplement family income. These children affected or infected by HIV/AIDS continue to live dangerously in many parts of the country where they lack access to health care, adequate treatment and face discrimination and exclusion. Orphans, children without security and many other children need counselling.

Considering the availability of enhanced knowledge of medicine and science for preventive and curative care, there should be no instances of neglect. He added that addressing the multi-sectorial issue of children and HIV/AIDS involves simultaneous efforts by organisations and institutions working at different levels of governance. The role of the State becomes integral in coordinating such efforts both at the Union and State level.

A resilient continuum of care and support within a rights-based framework to respond to all the issues faced by each child affected by chronic ailments such as HIV and AIDS needs proper implementation. It must also address the needs of single parents, especially single mother, as well as other caregivers especially with regard to their difficult and compromised circumstances in ensuring the care and protection of orphan and vulnerable children.

Simplification of documentation is needed to ensure the timely care of CIDC and it is important that they can avail the government schemes meant for them. Social acceptance of these children is very important and collaborative working is needed to ensure the same. The government also needs to relook into the funds it allocates for CABA.



# Child Trafficking and Child Marriage

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Chair :

Sonal i Khan,

Vice President ,  
Breakthrough

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Speakers

- Komal Ganotra, Director, Policy Advocacy and Research, Child Relief and You
  - Mohammad Asif, Director, Programme Implementation, Plan India
  - Ajeet Singh, Founder, Guria
  - KK Mukherjee, Founder Member, Gram Niyojan Kendra
  - Ranjan Panda, Deputy Director, Children in Need Institute
  - Gopala Krishna Murthy, Director, Academy of Gandhian Studies
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years and there is no framework safeguarding the protection of these children. While the RTE Act covers children between 6-14 years, child labour laws exclude children between 14-18 years.

She suggested a larger societal thought process and further stated that various stakeholders do not consider children as a separate group and comfortably accept children as adults.

She also talked about access to education for children. She mentioned that we have a pyramidal structure of education access to children. For every 100 primary schools, there are only 20% secondary schools. 70% of the lower caste girls do not go to schools.

### **Her discussion focused on two major factors affecting opportunities for children:**

**a) Lack of Human Resource:** A Child Prohibition Officer has certain responsibilities. He/she is an officer with an extra charge, unconnected with the Panchayat and the whole hierarchy, working in isolation. There is a District Labour Officer with another charge. Juvenile Justice Act calls for an honorary Child Welfare Committee (CWC) member and CSOs. There is no idea about how this resource will commit himself/herself to the ideas of protecting children from distress. It is also noteworthy that the CWC and Anti-Trafficking Cell are very urban in their approach.

**b) Budget for Children:** Laws and schemes do not talk about finances involved in the projects and programmes. A Child Prohibition Officer does not have the power to issue rescue orders or the resources to conduct rescue operations. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) does not have budgets. There is a huge dichotomy between what can be said and done and great contradiction between the various laws like those on rape, age of consent for sexual relationships and POCSO Act 2012 among others and their implementation.

Mohammad Asif said that there are no organic linkages between the social justice system and society. According to the Global Slavery Index, one out of every three trafficked children comes from South Asia. Modern day slavery needs to end.

A very critical aspect is understanding how cross border trafficking occurs. The whole issue of destination transit and route where trafficking takes place is a complex web which needs to be deciphered.

He also mentioned about Plan India's Missing Child Alert project and spoke about the Repatriation Information System, which is a technological intervention to bring down the time

from rescue to rehabilitation. Usually a child would spend at least a year on an average in a care home till the authorities could figure out where the child came from. Repatriation Information System has brought down the time, which has helped in treating children.

Ajeet Singh primarily spoke about children trafficked for sex work. Women sex workers bring in most of the children trafficked for sex. Even if these women cannot be made independent, these children can be helped. The women need to be reintegrated into society and must not depend on trafficking for their survival. He also said that law does not necessarily imply conviction. There is a whole process before it, and it must help those who are in need.

There is inadequate implementation of provisions of the Indian Penal Code, CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure) and Witness Protection. It is the system in itself which kills motivation and spirit. This leads to low convicting rates and in turn, this encourages perpetrators of child trafficking.

KK Mukherjee said that the problem of trafficking emerged since 1990s. Prior to that, prostitution was the only form of known trafficking. Society emphasises marriage. Trafficked girls are typically lured by the prospects of marriage and jobs. Due to poverty, they get trapped in the web of trafficking. There are multiple problems when it comes to child trafficking.

He shared a study done amongst sex workers. It revealed that traffickers are generally mothers and other family members. The entire families' monthly income and survival is dependent on young girls. He and his colleagues began talking to the families of sex workers, engaged with the mothers and increased their confidence in them. As of today, 86 of those trafficked and rescued children are pursuing their higher education. It is a much nuanced area of work—a complex space.

He also emphasised that economic development needs to be focused upon for better rehabilitation like promoting technical/vocational training among youth with the help and collaboration of local technical institutes, aid in marketing resources.

Ranjan Panda shared information about Mandar Block (Jharkhand). They support safe migration. In this tribal community, live-in relationships are a norm and women are supposed to be bread winners for the family. Many women are trafficked as domestic helps in bigger cities when they pursue work for financial support.

He said that there were severe systemic gaps which need plugging in. On a preventive front,



there needs to be empowerment of adolescents, parents and other stakeholders.

Moreover, there is a need to understand what different stakeholders can do and bring convergence within the community, the Panchayat and various other service providers. To track the most vulnerable children and provide support for them, the need of the hour are local solutions.

G K Murthy highlighted various lacunas—need for more community driven protection programmes, lack of livelihood opportunities, weak value system in families, no uniform age for children between all laws and policies and lastly, the lack of political will to bring about change.

As far as implementation of laws is concerned, there is no coordination between local governance, government functionaries and the judiciary. Trafficked children are still stigmatised in society. He stressed that schemes like Ladli/Lakshmi are

related to wedding of girls. He felt it would be better to make education oriented schemes. Attainment or non-attainment of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997) at the ages of 14-15 years is what will decide what happens to an individual later.

He emphasised that a stronger network, coalition and collaboration with all the stakeholders will bring in desirable results.

The session was chaired by Rajesh Kumar, who described substance abuse as one of the major issues placing children in difficult circumstances. It could be said that difficult circumstances in life compels children to get into drugs and fall prey to the vicious cycle.

Shivendu, a colleague of his from SPYM, discussed the work of the organisation and how they have been rehabilitating children who are

## Closing remarks by the chair

**Sonali Khan** extended thanks to the speakers for their thoughtful presentations. Child marriage is the violation of human rights and a practice that undermines efforts to promote sustainable development. Early marriage stifles abilities to succeed and grow into empowered men and women who can better off along with their families and communities. The problem in India is not limited to child marriage and its ill effects. Knowing that the major reasons for child marriage are poverty, fear of security and surmounting peer pressure coupled with economic constraints. The traffickers use it as a strategy to get the girls out of

marginalised areas and lure them into commercial sexual exploitation. Child marriage or forced marriage in India is becoming one of the major means of trafficking of adolescent girls. Thus, recognising this linkage, it is important to prioritise work on child marriage and child trafficking. It is a matter of grave concern that one out of every third child who is trafficked is in South Asia.

She said that the lack of human resources and proper budgets are endemic issues but there is need to work together and make the government focus its attention in this direction.



# Children in Drug and Substance Abuse

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Chair :

**Rajesh Kumar ,**

Executive Director ,

Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM)

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## Speakers

- RL Lalnunthara, Joint Director, Social Welfare Department, Government of Mizoram
  - Alok Agrawal, Assistant Professor, National Drug Dependence Treatment, Centre and Department of Psychiatry, AIIMS
  - Gary Reid, Technical Expert
  - Kunal Kishor, Project Coordinator, UNODC
  - Radhika Shrivastav, Director, Health Promotion, HRIDAY
  - Kalyanashish Das, Technical Advisor - Health, Plan India
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drug addicts. He also discussed how it becomes difficult for these drug addicts to lead a normal life as the stigma attached to their past pushes them back.

Rajesh Kumar also shared his experience about how most of the rehabilitation homes are in a bad shape and how poor psycho-social support compels a large section of these children to attempt running away from government run centres.

To discuss it further, a panel of eminent experts addressed the varied topics related to CIDC.

RL Lalnunthara shared the government's perspective on the issue in the state of Mizoram. He shared that mostly children from low income families consume drugs due to break down in familial structures and peer pressure.

In Mizoram, he observed that women are more addicted to drugs than boys, which is a unique trend. He emphasised that prevention to addiction should be the focus and informed the audience that the state government has actively engaged with adolescents to make them aware of the harmful effects of drug abuse. He also stressed the need to curb the supply channel of these drugs—the effort towards which is lax and is defined by ineffective systems and porous borders.

In Mizoram, he added, the problem is complicated and the government is including the issue in the school curriculum as a subject to make students understand the problem. The government is also collaborating with religious bodies as they reach deep into society.

Alok Agrawal said that substance use and CIDC are two sides of the same coin. It is important to understand that when adults consume drugs, the environment at home becomes violent in most cases and ends up putting the children in difficult circumstances. He also shared that at least 15 to 20 million people in India are addicted to various forms of drugs. It is difficult to imagine the situation of children in such families. Unfortunately, the rate of drug consumption among children is as high as in adults.

He emphasised on the red flags which a family must recognise and seek medical help on. The propensity for drugs and substance addiction may be a genetic condition in some cases with the environment acting as an additional factor.

Addressing the question of how to manage the situation, he said counselling is important. For this purpose, he suggested that conversations with non-specialists who are trained in counselling can

be of help. Higher education in medicine is not required for counselling children. It is also important to treat adults, as children learn from them.

In regard to dealing with children/people who come from the upper and middle class and consume drugs, Alok Agrawal said that people from all strata of society are affected. This reflects the need for mental health care. He also stressed on the importance of mental health care and support.

Gary Reid said that it is important to first understand the issue and then move forward. He shared the observation that capacity of people working in relevant organisations is very low on a national level. Moreover, the people who are addicted to drugs are ostracised and treated inhumanly.

He focused on the available data related to children and youth into different types of substance abuse across the country and stressed for a standardised data collection tool. He also spoke about the acquisition of skills and technical knowledge to carry forward the large scale programmes. He finally stated that better research is important as it will give us a future plan of action.

Kunal Kishor, in his presentation, shared that there has been a significant rise in drug abuse in recent years. Only one in six people in the world get treatment.

He reiterated that India has seen an alarming spike in the consumption and injection of illicit drugs among young adults and teenagers. He said that to address the issue, it better coordination between different stake holders. Prevention programmes must target multiple settings and multiple risk factors particularly among vulnerable children such as children of substance users, children injecting substances, street children and children involved in child labour, trafficked children, and children of sex workers and any other category who are at risk. The process of rehabilitation is also important and the families and communities need to be prepared to accept the child.

Kunal Kishor finally shared a class perspective on drug usage, he further stated that the children from affluent families starts consuming drugs early in life compared to the poor and the marginalised. They are also able to escape the vicious cycle faster due to better access to de-addiction programmes.

Radhika Shrivastav said that it is important to promote a healthy lifestyle. She focused on tobacco and alcohol abuse in her talk. She stressed that there needs to be an evidence-based intervention.



She emphasised on sustained advocacy efforts by civil society in bringing about lasting changes in policies like 80% pictorial depiction of danger of tobacco smoking which the government has endorsed. She made the audience aware that adolescents and youth are most vulnerable to Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and drugs and substance abuse are precursors to NCDs like hypertension and cardiac and liver diseases. She also stressed that drugs with unhealthy food habits act as a catalyst for diseases. Hence during rehabilitation, there is not enough emphasis on nutrition.

Kalyanashish Das shared Plan India's experience of working with young people. The median age of drug initiation is 14.5 years. He stated that while

tobacco is more related to peer pressure and fun, alcohol usage is related to stress, broken familial structures and violence.

He shared learnings from various programmes with young people. Peer to peer contact processes have been successful in reaching out to a large sections of the youth. It helped in significant increase in identification and referrals. It also helped in behavioural changes amongst youth.

The peer group model saw a significant change of 19.5% in the behaviour of regular/occasional users who have quit substance abuse. It helped in 100% abstinence from substance abuse. There was an increase in confidence, sense of accomplishment and recognition as well.

## Closing remarks by the chair

While summarising the session, **Rajesh Kumar** mentioned that use of narcotic substances among children is basically due to curiosity, peer pressure and also low perception of harm and migration. Poverty and street life, added to the menace. He emphasised that substance abuse among children and adolescents is an urgent public health concern. He told the audience that substance use at a younger age interferes with normative age-appropriate development and makes children more vulnerable to several health and psycho-social adversities. Therefore, it is important to recognise various risk factors associated with early onset of substance use.

Rajesh Kumar said that early identification and prevention is necessary to curb the menace of substance abuse among children and adolescents. He pointed out that risk factors could influence drug abuse in several ways. The more risks a child is exposed to, the more likely the child will indulge in drugs and other substances. He mentioned that while some risk factors are particularly

potent, they might not influence drug abuse unless certain conditions prevail. He said that a strong link exists between substance use and troubled family life. In most cases, it is parents who are responsible for pushing their children on the verge of substance abuse, either by forcing them to work in a harsh environment or the children themselves leave their parents and settle on the street or stations to get out of the exploitative and an abusive home environment.

He also mentioned that at least 4% of Delhi's school children have consumed drugs in the last 30 days. However, the government and society is in denial. Rajesh Kumar stated that age group of children starting drug consumption in Punjab is getting lower. Early intervention is key to de-addiction and even prevention.

He made specific mention of the Government of Mizoram for being pro-active in fighting the menace of drug consumption.

Special Keynote Address by Honourable Justice Shri. Madan B. Lokur ,  
Supreme Court of India



According to Honourable Justice Shri. Madan B.Lokur, Plan India's work has been highlighted in all major media in the recent past in the Northeast and it shows that a lot of good work has been done. He expressed hope that good ideas and suggestions will come forth from the conference.

For Justice Lokur, there are a lot of complex problems in the Indian legal systems. All of them cannot be solved only through lectures and speeches but a lot of works needs to be done. Some of the major problems he highlighted include:

- Endemic delay and cases remain pending for several years which is not good for the justice delivery systems. Even cases involving children are pending for a long time. Cases filed against children especially in conflict with law, are yet to be resolved. This is very disturbing and there
- needs to be a quick justice system in place for these children. Children face violence in society and need urgent care, protection, guidance and assistance. They need special attention and the delivery of services requires a specific time frame for normal justice.
- Litigation expenses are very high all over the country. Even in cases involving children, there is no respite. Due to this, it is difficult to reach out to children with proper legal services. Children should get justice before the Juvenile Justice Board. Legal expenses need to be minimised so that both children and women can access quality legal service delivery on time. There are several documents developed by Government of India, such as:
  - National Charter for Children in 2003

- National Plan of Action in 2005
- National Policy for Children in 2013

Justice Lokur said that all these documents can teach us what can be done and what should be done. There are good ideas but practicality is needed to design and implement the same. What should be done is known but these documents do not really educate on how it can be done and how to implement them properly.

There is draft Action Plan for Children 2016 but this is not yet finalised. The most important aspect is implementation which is the key to the success to any programme meant for children.

- He also said that the absence of management techniques which are on demand to facilitate the entire judicial systems in the country.

In his address, Justice Lokur has defined the role of major institutions in society in addressing the problems of children, such as:

1. Role of judiciary in respect to children's problems in India
2. Role of Civil Society in regards to children's issues
3. Role of the Government in address the problems of children

## Role of Judiciary

Justice Lokur said that the judiciary does not have any fixed income or money but there are certain things that need to be done such as:

- Establishment of Special Courts like the special court under POCSO Act. However, these courts are not adequate and are not sitting on a regular basis. If we do not have adequate systems like this, children are bound to face problems. This needs to be looked at very seriously.
- There is a need to improve the existing courts. Courts in districts and taluks are in a pathetic condition. Surprisingly, many of them are operating out of rented premises and it is the government who provides such services. Some of them are in a dilapidated condition. Things need to be improved. There is need to take care of the environment in court where children and women can feel safe and comfortable. He made reference to

experiments that were conducted in New Delhi which can be used as an example of a successful model. In Delhi, Vulnerable Witness Courts are established in two to three places where children will feel comfortable. There is a separate entry point for children and systems are available where children cannot see the offender during the process of hearing. These are really adding value to the systems and processes. He noted that in Telangana, the courts are in a very bad shape. Some courts are located in dark, shabby and uncomfortable areas. Changes are needed and which can happen with active efforts.

- Improvement in the availability of legal aid services for children. Across India, the situation is dire, except in New Delhi. Children cannot afford the cost of legal aid services. In some cases, children might be implicated for a crime they did not committed. In such situations, legal aid services are very important. However, these services are not up to the mark, which is quite disturbing.
- We need to be sensitive to the cause of children and poor people. If a child has to visit court frequently for appearing in the case, then the child will miss schools and his/her parents will lose wages

Justice Lokur emphasised the need to implement JJ Homes for children for their safety and protection. Children should be provided with education, skills training, health care, etc. There is a need to supervise the work done under the NCPCR as per the law and observance of rule of law for sustainable development. Repeated hearings and long periods of legal proceedings contribute towards a traumatic experience for a child. This needs to be rectified for through legal education. Proper implementation of the Judicial Justice Act is most important and the work of the statutory needs to be monitored and sensitised accordingly. He mentioned that the rule of law needs to be maintained for SDGs.

## Role of Civil Society

Justice Lokur emphasised that there is a need for civil society to take up few roles to assist the effective implementation of the laws and provisions, such as – Documentation of good practices is very important. The best practices



collected by Plan India and other organisations need to be shared and, more importantly, discussed.

Justice Lokur attached due importance to research on children's management of homes, quality of food and the education and health care services being provided. NGOs need to be more pro-active, collect data, develop reports and discuss between themselves. CSOs are the 5th state and a watchdog of child rights and wellbeing. A composite solutions can be found in the future. 39% of India's population are children (2011 Census). There are lots of responsibility that need to be carried out by CSOs. The involvement of grass root organizations/ individuals is critical as their role is very important and in visiting homes, their problems need to be looked into and addressed judiciously.

**Role of the Government:** Justice Lokur stated that the government has an important role to play in respect to children.

According to him, trafficking of children is a grave concern. It is reported that 200 children go missing every day. The NCRB data 2015 states that 3,490 go missing a year. That is incorrect because if 200 children go missing every day, it should amount to 40,000 a year. He has opined that there might be something wrong either with data representation or in the data collection process. There is a need to look at human trafficking and child trafficking which is a grave concern both within the country and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal.

Protection of child rights is an important aspect that the government has to take responsibility for. As per the NCRB data 2015, 94,172 crimes were committed against children, on average that is 250 crimes per day. On the other hand, this data does not account for cases of kidnapping. A significant number of children are being kidnapped in the country but are not being reported.

A multi-disciplinary approach is needed and coordination among all ministers is very important. There are various departments that directly deal with child development issues, including the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. In most of the cases, they work in isolation. For the best interests of the children,

every department must coordinate with each other to address the problems. All issues are somehow linked with each other like child labour and child marriage. Mutual collaboration and coordination is required.

Fourthly, the government should encourage CSR contributions to aid and benefit children.

He emphasised that sensitisation of the police is an important aspect because in many cases, the police are responsible in supporting the judiciary in the process of criminal case investigations. A lot of cases are being reported in regards to children that have fallen prey to violence while in police custody. The police should work with grass root level organisations. They need to be adequately trained on child friendly behaviour as they deal with children along with other social groups.

### To conclude his keynote address, Justice Lokur mentioned two submissions:

1. The Preamble of the Constitution of India talks about social, economic, political justice including fraternity. The general population is not often use this. The Constitution says that fraternity is important as it ensure human dignity. There needs to be fraternal feelings towards children in society because these children are from India and not another countries. Their dignity needs to be looked after. Fraternity is equally important to freedom, liberty and equality. So, there is a need to look at CIDC through such fraternal feelings.
2. It is important to work in a union, the judiciary, government, CSOs, corporate sector. There cannot be any competition between the sectors or institutions. The judiciary does what it feels is the best, the government what it feels is best. At times, this can cause a difference in opinions. For the best interests of the children, the problems of children need to be addressed collectively. The National Conference is important as it brings together individuals from all walks of life on the same platform. The steps taken by Plan India are very significant. The mind-set of the judiciary, government and other stakeholders are bound to change if a positive outlook is kept.



# Day 2

## November 24, 2016

The second day of National Conference on Plan for Every Child deliberated on the issues pertaining to response of the duty bearers such as media, corporate, law enforcement agency, judiciary, government and CSOs. Speakers shared the issues they have faced on one or many occasions and how these experiences have shaped the struggles in their work.

Participants from different regions also collaborated to discuss the issues they face in their region. Based on their experiences in state consultations and regional conferences, they suggested the ways to tackle specific issues in their respective regions.

# Plenary Session 2:

## We the Stakeholders - Government, Law Enforcement and Judiciary

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Chair :

**Madhukar Kamath,**

Group CEO and Managing Director ,  
DDB Mudra Group and Chairman, Interbrand India

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Speakers

- Amitabh Rajan, Retired IAS, Home Secretary, Maharashtra
  - Sarat Kumar Mishra, Former DGP, Odisha
  - Manjula Krishnan, Retired IES, Member Secretary, National Commission for Empowerment of Women
  - Amod Kanth, Retired IPS Officer, Founder, Prayas
  - Prita Jha, President Director, Peace and Equality Cell
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Chair for the session, **Madhukar Kamath**, introduced the participants and audience to the issues faced by government bodies, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. Their struggle is largely unseen in the public domain. But they also face challenges in delivering what is expected from them. These three pillars of democracy are instrumental in bringing about changes in society as a whole.

Amitabh Rajan started his address by saying that it is an international situation when speaking about CIDC. He said there is too much rigidity in the implementation of laws and there is a need for evidence based policy making. Solutions have to be inter-disciplinary. In his words, "There are Czars and Czarinas even in the social sector."

He stated that in India, due to its huge and diverse population of children, it is important to understand who is being spoken about - my child, urban child or children in villages. The status quo of family laws also need to be reviewed. In Indian society, concept of rights within the family are not acknowledged.

Taking about the Juvenile Justice system, he said that the JJ Act formed in 1986 was amended in 2015 by the Indian parliament. The amendment suggested that juveniles in conflict with the law in the age group of 16-18 years and involved in heinous offences can be tried as adults. The Justice Verma Committee told Parliament that it does not recommend this. The standing committee of the Rajya Sabha as well as the Supreme Court opposed the amendment. Yet, the Lok Sabha passed it. He said that the culture of counter hegemony is present in India, but discourse cannot be controlled.

Amitabh Rajan shared that there are many studies that have been done on juveniles and violent crimes. There is a need to look into these and learn from them. The waiver system in the Juvenile Justice process has been rejected internationally. There cannot be a continuance with something that has failed everywhere else. There is therapeutic jurisprudence being practiced for children in substance abuse, which is extremely relevant in the Indian context.

Sarat Chandra Mishra, retired IPS officer, shared his inputs on making the police system more efficient as the police most often come into contact with children who are in conflict with law. Majority of chain snatchers are in the age group of 15-18 years. He suggested that the police should register FIRs in all cases related to children. These cases must be charge-sheeted and thoroughly investigated under the supervision of a senior

officer. There has been a serious debate around the age of juveniles and there is a need to ascertain the same.

In cases relating to sexual abuse, there should be no delay in the medical examination. It is our responsibility to provide proper counselling to the children and their families.

He also suggested that safe conditions should be created in schools, playgrounds, public transport and all other places that children access.

In his address, he also highlighted certain shortcomings in the police system. He stressed that the Police are an enforcement agency. Social legislation cannot be implemented through them as they lack the training, temperament and resources to do it.

At present, women constitute only 20% of police force. This should be increased to 30% and every police station or Chowki ought to operate a Mahila-Shishu Desk handled solely by women officers. This would not only bolster team morale but also provide gender-sensitive services to citizens in distress. The speaker was of the opinion that there exists an imbalance of power within the police force that lends itself to improper implementation.

Manjula Krishnan said that while many policies have been generated for children, we need to pause and re-examine what already exists. She highlighted many lacunae in the system. Several commissions are in place for children, such as ITPA (Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act), NCPDR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights), NHRC (National Human Rights Commission) and NCW (National Commission for Women), but there is a lack of realistic understanding of programmes.

She stated that there are inadequate fund allocations in various government-run campaign. Moreover, under-qualified individuals have been employed due to a lack of funds. Even where technology is in place, there is a lack of qualified people to properly utilise the same. The government also needs to understand that just paying salaries does not run a campaign. There needs to be a systemic mind-set shift which accepts that money spent on training human resource and hiring experts is also project cost. The government needs to involve third party monitoring for quality of delivery in various campaign and programmes.

She also shared that all schemes and policies launched by the central government become the responsibility of the Centre and there is not much ownership by the states. We should have general

schemes by the Centre and the states should have the freedom to tweak them and demarcate their funds for the same. The Centre's role should only be of monitoring and evaluation.

We also need a separate ministries for children and women. As of now, the women and children ministry coexist. We must realise that they are independent and should be treated accordingly.

Amod Kanth started his address by stating that there is no legislation, policy or scheme which defines CIDC. Prior to 1992, there was also no law for neglected children. Children could not go to any court to have their rights enforced. In our policies, we have given very little importance to children. In the early 1990s, 0.4% of the GDP was allocated for child protection, which has now risen to 1%. He stressed that we do not uphold the rights of a child, all we are doing is providing for the needs of the child, and in that too we often fail. He added that a budget of Rs 200-300 Crore is grossly inadequate for 30 million children and does not help enough in achieving the onerous task before us.

Various bodies that have been created through laws and institutions within the legal framework are not functioning. He observed that an amendment in the Child Labour Act of renaming a child as an adolescent has changed a lot as it snatches away the legal privileges these children had earlier.

Policies are there, but the issue is their implementation, which needs to be strengthened along with budgets for children's well-being, development and protection. He stated that a majority of child labourers are forced by their families into labour due to socio-economic conditions. He also mentioned that juveniles are essentially children in need of care and protection. 99.9% of juveniles are children in extremely difficult circumstances.

Prita Jha started her address by mentioning the existing schemes and highlighted the significant gaps in implementation. More research, data and documentation requires to be put in place to address the lacuna in the existing schemes. Furthermore she stated that our criminal justice system is highly state-specific, compounded by a lack of good investigation and evidence in many cases.

She expressed that we should be concerned about the quality of lower courts where the highest number of cases turns up. There is a need for sensitising judicial officials in the lower courts.

It is important for people responsible for delivering justice to understand that 70% of the children never report cases of sexual violence. If a child is reporting it, he/she is breaking the cycle of silence. The law will not work on its own. We will have to engage with the system. The judiciary can be pursued to order for counselling and further investigation.

She said that the law in England and in India is the same in spirit. But, the difference is in the legal aid provided. We need to bring about a drastic change in the quality of legal aid with regard to the shelter homes, counselling etc., and increase protection for informants, survivors and witnesses.

She also said that the Juvenile Justice Act needs to focus on creating a child friendly environment. It is important to align legislations with systems. As a family is a primary institution for children, we need to include families in all interventions. The patriarchal system in society is a major challenge which needs to be addressed by promoting gender equality. Sensitivity towards victims, informants and witnesses is crucial.

## Closing remarks by the chair

**Madhukar Kamath** thanked the speakers for addressing the gamut of issues faced by CIDC, from law enforcement to judicial perspectives. He stated that issues identified by the speakers are important factors to be considered for tackling the same. There is much rigidity in the implementation of laws in India, and this must be addressed. We also need to look at and learn from various studies on juveniles from across the globe, which will help address current issues faced by CIDC.

There should be no delay in medical

examination of victims of sexual violence. Also, proper counselling must be provided to children in such situations.

We also need to have a national policy for CIDC, which presently we do not have. Various bodies which have been created by government need to be activated. These bodies could contribute by taking into account the current circumstances faced by CIDC. He concluded by emphasising the need for proper implementation of existing schemes and laws.

# Plenary Session 3:

## We the Stakeholders - Civil Society, Media and Corporates

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Chair :

**Madhukar Kamath,**

Group CEO and Managing Director, DDB Mudra Group  
and Chairman, Interbrand India

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Speakers

- Radhika Bordia, Senior Journalist, NDTV
- Kavita Ratna, Director Advocacy, Concern for Working Child
- Anurag Pratap, CSR Head, Capgemini
- Tanishtha Dutta, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF
- Patralekha Chatterjee, Social Columnist



Continuing from the last session, this session focused on the roles of CSOs, Media and Corporates in dealing with issues relating to CIDC. Chair for the session, Madhukar Kamath, introduced the session as an extremely in that it involved stakeholders - media, CSOs and corporates - who have been instrumental in reaching out to CIDC.

Radhika Bordia began her address by saying that India is a country that is happy to re-watch the same debates on television repeatedly. There is a large number of journalists who are committed to report on issues that require on-ground reporting. But more often than not, main news gets top billing, as anything with dramatic manifestation receives attention and importance.

She suggested that CSOs can support the media in contextualising a number of things. They can provide them with data and statistics; help them locate the stories since journalists usually have a paucity of time and too little room to do research. CSOs can approach younger journalists for reporting as it provides a sense of recognition and responsibility for the journalist. More creative ways are required to share the grim statistics with larger masses.

She told the audience that there is inadequate funding for this kind of development journalism. The issues that usually get covered are the ones which find sponsorship.

In the media, careers are not made by reporting on development issues as such coverage is considered boring and preachy. To this end, CSOs can help make such reporting more creative so it is not dependent on sensational journalism (like roping in a celebrity which is presently the best means to bring a story forward). CSOs could generate data to help the media raise larger awareness of issues faced by children.

Kavita Ratna started her presentation by asking who the stakeholders are. We are not a homogenous group. She said that all of us are acting for children. We are self-appointed advocates and must not forget that we are not real advocates. The agency of children must be brought forth and they must be heard with the weight and dignity they deserve.

We also need to unpack civil society as a whole and identify all the big and small stakeholders involved who affect the lives of children. There are different micro and macro causes for the difficult circumstances that children live in. When designing a solution, it is very critical to understand the lens through which the problem is being seen and to look at the interrelatedness of issues.

She said that the work that we have done so far is nothing more than removing the children from the streets. There is no proper rehabilitation of children back in families and communities. Issues and concerns must be looked at constituency wise. The agency, dignity and accountability of NGOs should be increased in every constituency. Best practices of NGOs need to be put in place, but they should be implemented with a clear understanding of their spirit.

There is a need to identify child friendly parameters to illustrate the definitions of child friendly and best interest of the child. We also need to strategize on how organisational learnings are transferred to future generations. The journey is long and only a positive mind-set will bear better outcomes.

Anurag Pratap began his address by saying that Corporate Social Responsibility needs to have social common sense embedded in it. It needs to be flexible, not rigid. He mentioned that collaboration with CSOs has helped his firm develop better templates, projects and proposals.

Over the last few years, his firm consciously not only set aside money, but also took a deep interest in designing interventions for most marginalised communities- sex workers and their families, ethnic and linguistic minorities to provide them livelihood support so they are able to sustain themselves.

He added that if a corporate wants to do real CSR, they need to understand the constituency. If a corporate cannot commit even 2% of their profit to CSR activities it is useless to run an organisation and make profits.

It is important that the media shows what is happening in India rather than what is not. If the media captures positive stories then more corporate houses will come forward with initiatives as well. Funds are not a challenge when doing good work, but it is important to bridge the trust gap between corporates and CSOs.

Tanishtha Dutta said that the SDGs in the Agenda 2030 are a unique opportunity. It is the first time that all countries, developed or developing, have a universal set of goals. Unless we meet our commitment to the children, even if one goal is not met, all others will be unmet as well. However, the agenda cannot be fulfilled by the member states or the UN alone- all CSOs need to come together.

She talked about the multiple deprivations a child faces and stressed that the real issues get lost amid larger narratives. A larger, issue-based focus is required.

The SDGs do not talk about the reduction in violence, rather its complete elimination. 57 targets in SDGs are directly related to children. Thus, it is globally accepted that children are the focus of the SDGs.

She also talked about the polarised world we live in today. Different functionaries have different priorities, which makes it difficult to engage on behalf of children rationally with anyone who may not be of the same opinion. She posited that the UN could do well to reach out to people in a better way and hear their points of view, explain their own and address their collective concerns. She concluded by emphasizing the need for collective action for children.

Patralekha Chatterjee highlighted that children from any constituency are not backed by advertising revenue, since they are not the

consumers and have no voice. She felt that there is a need to represent the children by a powerful voice, who will not have their own vested interests but to promote the cause of children and their views.

There are young reporters who want to cover such issues but are not well paid. The new media provides an opportunity, but there is constant pressure to write pieces that appeal to everyone. For instance, when writing about child marriage as a health hazard, one has to use different strokes for different people. It is essential to understand what will excite people and how to contextualise it for the media.

She said that journalists may not bring the change needed but they can help shift the focus. There is a larger space for citizen journalism in the present scenario.

## Closing remarks by the chair

**Madhukar Kamath** said that this session helped the audience understand the nuanced issues relating to working with CIDC for media, CSOs and corporates. Many action points emerged from the session. The CSOs and media can work together in bringing out the issues from farther areas. The CSOs can help the media to contextualise many things, and help gather data and statistics. They can also help locate stories for media. Despite the fact that careers are not made out of development journalism, there are many

bright young journalists working tirelessly in order to bring the stories to the masses.

It is also important for CSOs to create a process of disseminating organisational learnings to others. The role of corporates can be utilised in numerous additional ways than those normally utilised. Media can also help corporates to showcase positive stories which can further motivate other corporates to work with those who need their help.

# Plenary Session 4:

## Regional Breakout Sessions

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The idea behind regional breakout sessions was to give an opportunity to participants and CSOs from five regions of the country to deliberate once again on the situation of CIDC in their regions based on reports from the regional conferences. The members of CSOs together created a presentation identifying key issues and recommendations from the region. While identifying the key issues, participants deliberated on reasons behind problems and ways through which they can tackle them.

The sessions helped members create action points for the India Declaration. The key findings and learnings will help members and activists create an action plan for coming years.



## East er n Region

Members from the Eastern region discussed various issues faced by the children. The sessions at the conference and regional conferences provided a framework for participants to identify issues and come up with recommendations and an action plan for the region.

The participants from Eastern region identified five key issues:

- Child labour
- Child marriage
- Child trafficking
- Children affected with HIV/AIDS
- Threat from natural disasters

Members from the region posited numerous recommendations:

- It is important to prioritise and increase budget on children, particularly CIDC.
- Focus on ensuring right to identity for all CIDC. This is crucial for equality in society.

- Greater focus is required for children with, especially girls. We all need to invest in enhancing capacities of various stakeholders who can support them. Status of special schools needs to be improved.
- More vigilant action is required to ensure the protection for adolescent girls, who remain particularly vulnerable.
- It is important to promote programming on enhancing parent to child communication, particularly for families where child is at apparent risk.
- The members came up with an action plan for the region as well:
- There needs to be a deeper analysis of all the recommendations and how they can be implemented effectively.
- Strengthen the network of CSOs working towards common goals.
- Focus should be on capacity building of various stakeholders so that they can effectively contribute in the implementation of laws and provisions to address the plight of children.

## West er n Region

The participants from Western region deliberated over issues from various parts of the region.

They identified the following key issues and came up with certain recommendations to address key issues.

- Child labour
- Child marriage
- Displaced/migrant children
- Children at risk of sexual exploitation

Based on the discussions, members came up with numerous recommendations:

- In Maharashtra and Goa, there are no statutory provisions for children. The members recommended that in the entire western region, there should be a statutory provision by the State Government within 90 days of the formation of the government, or within 90 days of expiry of the term of respective statutory body such as SCPCRs, ICPS, JJBs, CWCs, Children Court and State Action Plan for Children.
- Members also recommended that the child development budget should be increased to 1%

- of the state budget. CIDC must be allotted an exclusive budget which should be decided with the help of child budget experts. This needs to be monitored by CAG, as present budget allocations are inadequate and not fully utilised.
- An apex supervisory body should be established to monitor the functioning of statutory monitoring committees as defined by respective state legal provisions. These committees should be formed within 90 days. This is to ensure accountability on the part of authorities responsible for appointment of these committees. As of now, in most states of Western India such provisions are not implemented.
- It was also recommended to identify CIDC and include them in the government database in order to provide a necessary identity. At present, there is no such database or provisions to provide legal proof of identity for CIDC.
- There should be a comprehensive scheme for CIDC with special emphasis on street connected children, SGBT, migrant children and displaced children. The present schemes are addressing these vulnerable groups of CIDC.
- The members came up with an action plan to realise these goals.

- There needs to be regional and state level network formation on CIDC.
- Conduct intensive formative research on CIDC in the region and respective states.
- Capacity building of key stake holders in legislation and schemes related to Child

Marriage Act, Child Labour Act, POCSO, JJ Act and other relevant laws.

- Facilitating the convergence of interventions implemented by various government departments.

## Southern Region

Participants from various CSOs from the Southern region deliberated over issues faced across the region. They shared critical information with each other, exchanging best practices and lessons learned. The session helped in knowledge sharing of the participants.

The Southern region identified 4 key issues:

Child labour

Child marriage

Children at risk of sexual exploitation including trafficking

Children impacted by disasters

Based on their discussion, the members came up with numerous recommendations:

- Capacity building exercise of duty bearers at all levels is important. It has been found that duty bearers lack the capacity to tackle certain issues appropriately. A better workforce is required at all levels.
- There needs to be budgetary allocation for children. Special focus must be given to CIDC.

- CSOs and other stakeholders need to gather data on CIDC in the region. There has to be information recording system of CIDC. A proper research mechanism is needed for this.
- Children are worst affected by climate change, disasters and droughts. These lead to migration, displacement and unwanted urbanization, which create difficult circumstances for children. These need to be addressed properly by various governments.
- The government needs to make space for children in their policy deliberations and decision making.
- Community based planning and monitoring of implementation of laws and schemes for children was recommended.
- Members from the region deliberated upon an action plan for the region:
- There needs to be a 'status of child report'. This will help in holding State governments accountable for CIDC.
- Various CSOs need to work together to create a database on children and CIDC with access at all levels.

## Northern Region

Members from the Northern region deliberated on various issues and came up with suggestions, recommendations and an action plan to work towards the goal of reaching out to more and more CIDC, and contribute in the Plan for Every Child initiative.

The North region identified 4 key issues:

Child marriage

Child labour

Child trafficking

Girls as victims of violence

The members deliberated on identified issues and posited numerous recommendations:

- Education is the clear determinant of progress. Continued education can be crucial in tackling child marriage. CSOs and other stakeholders must come up with new and innovative ways to make this possible. Extension of Right to Education (RTE) till the twelfth grade can be instrumental in delaying the age of marriage for girls. Moreover, a majority of dropouts take place around the age of 14. Expanding the scope of RTE till grade 12 will bring a national focus to girls' issues.
- There is a need to create safe spaces/institutions/communities for children. This has to be a part of the governance agenda.

Children must be engaged at various level of decision making. Inclusion of youth in governance at Panchayat and Municipality level can help in integrating child centric planning in local governance. This plan of action has to be taken at the municipal level.

- There is a need to create a database on child labour and mechanisms to track children engaged in labour.
- Child labour age should be increased to 18 years and government should ensure education, through RTE, till the age of 18. This should be covered under CLPRA. Continued education will lead to a reduction in child labour.
- There is a need for a strengthened child tracking system and legal aid mechanism for to address trafficking in persons. This must be achieved through appropriate budget allocation for implementation of legal schemes.
- To tackle the issue of girls as victims of violence, it is important to ensure timely implementation of laws/acts as per laid legal/statutory process. Dignity of girls needs to be focused upon. Justice delayed is justice denied. This leads to psychological trauma of victims and the perpetrators gets away. Timeliness in justice is critical.

The session also brought forward an action plan:

- The CSOs need to continue supporting the best practices to address the plight of children within the communities and demonstrate these models to government for replication.

- Creation of pressure groups for advocacy is critical. Networks and coalitions have to be promoted and activated.
- Children's birth certificates should be linked with AADHAR numbers of their parents. CSOs can link up with government agencies to take this task at priority level.
- The network of duty bearers needs to be strengthened to make policies and legislations child friendly.
- There should be an effort to provide financial support for families who, in present situation, do not have any alternatives other than to send their children to work.
- To tackle the issue of child trafficking, there needs to be proper advocacy and awareness at the community level.
- Campaigns for sensitisation of men and boys regarding gender can help in tackling issues relating to violence against girls.
- Convergence of different stakeholders is important as it will lead to division of labour and resources.
- CSOs need to work with the communities, creation of Bal Suraksha Dals at school level will provide an opportunity to engage children in their own protection.
- Publication of research papers and journals on best practices as well as their dissemination is important to create a means for knowledge sharing and cross learning. These should also guide to relevant policy framework.

## North-Eastern Region

Members from North-Eastern region deliberated on the issues faced by CIDC in the region. The region is different from other regions of India as it shares international borders, and long political turbulence exists in the region in the form of insurgency.

The North-East region identified 4 key issues:

Children using drugs

Victims of sexual violence including child marriage

Missing, trafficked children and children in insurgency

Orphaned, abandoned children, street children, including those affected/ infected by HIV

The members posited with numerous recommendations:

- Strengthening implementation of existing policies, programmes and laws related to children.
- New innovative programmes for targeted groups focusing on family and community based interventions.
- Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and research components of programmes for better accountability.
- Meaningful engagement of civil society and other stake holders for stronger advocacy.
- Ensure availability of adequate budget (with a provision to utilize budget for some innovative practices) for child welfare and protection.



The members suggested an action plan as well:

- There is a lack of attention from parents, community and the political class in addressing the issues of drugs in the region. CSOs need to mobilise all stakeholders to become sensitive towards the plight of children.
- There needs to be focus on gender sensitisation in the region. CSOs and other stakeholders need to actively organize different campaigns to promote gender equality and rights of girl child.

## Presentations at Plenary

Chair :

Mohammed Asif,

Program Director, Plan India

Prabha Pandey,

Former Country Director,  
Plan Nepal and Plan Thailand

Mohammed Asif from Plan India shared the consolidated findings from each regional break-out session with the audience, emphasizing their critical nature. There are issues including child labour, children as victims of sexual violence and child marriage that are common to most regions.

Prabha Pandey said that child led social audits are very important. She added that drug abuse in the North-East is an important issue for rest of the country as well. Every region has specially talked about budget allocation for child programmes; this clearly demonstrates a dearth of budgetary allocations and funding for children. This needs to be collectively addressed.



# Day 3

## November 25, 2016

On day three of the conference, the speakers and moderators elaborated on how programmes could potentially be scaled up. The sessions featured speakers deliberating on ways forward.

The India Declaration on Plan for Every Child was also released on this day.

# Plenary Session 5:

## Tracking the Changes and making the Needle Move for CIDC

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Chair :

Tanya Barron,

CEO, Plan International, UK

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Speakers

- Jagadananda, Mentor and Co-Founder, Centre for Youth and Social Development
  - Tom Thomas, CEO, Praxis
  - Neeta Goel, Senior Evaluation Specialist, 3iE
  - Roland Angerer, Regional Director, Plan International, Eastern and Southern Africa Sharmishtha Basu, Programme Officer, Poverty Youth and Gender at Population Council
  - Pradeep Narayanan, Director – Programme Strategy and Policy, Plan India
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The session began with **Tanya Barron** inviting **Rupesh**, a youth advocate from Plan India's Youth Advisory Panel (YAP), to talk about his experiences. He shared that the youth have a major role to play in making the much needed changes being talked about. Several policies and laws are there but there are severe inadequacies in their implementation. For instance, there is free and compulsory education, but we need to look at the conditions of the schools. In his opinion the Indian Parliamentarians need to hear the voices of young people, otherwise they will remain unaware of grassroots realities.

Jagadananda said that the issue of CIRC is not a project with a start and end date, rather it is a process. He said that there are four key areas that we need to focus on. The first is the case of malnutrition, which is a dangerous problem. There is a severe lack in the capacity of the system to deal with it. The first 1,000 days in the life of any child are very critical. 46% children in Odisha in that age group have stunted growth.

If we look at the budget spend on education, development and protection over the last five years, it shows a declining trend. We need strong structural changes. The centre's role is declining and the state's role is increasing in dealing with such issues. It is the states that are going to locate their priorities and decide their funds.

Moreover, there is a massive gap in terms of effective monitoring and evaluation; there is no collation of data and trend analysis. Niti Ayog is working on indicators for the 2030 vision, but states also need to have their own action plans and indicators.

In his opinion, we have policies, but there is no effective implementation plan following the same. We, the NCPHR, NHRC and other statutory bodies need to take up issues faced by CIRC. CSOs need to have an innovative approach to programming and also, learn how to market their successful models to the government.

The community has a huge role to play and we need more and more social accountability- community led monitoring of programs, expenditure tracking. He said that there is a need for concrete action by civil societies which should go beyond the workshop/conferences.

Tom Thomas, in his address, highlighted the needs of children followed by the challenges on the path to realising those needs. Every child has a basic need to feel protected and safe. More research and evaluation is required to understand what feeling safe and protected means to children living in difficult circumstances. For this, we need to be inclusive of disabled children and children living in special circumstances.

He said that our city planning is usually done from the lens of an adult male, as there is no provision for women safety, elderly people etc.; it needs to be more inclusive of children. Children are essentially considered an audience in transition. So, the perspective becomes- why invest in an audience which does not have a lot to offer and are not a vote bank? They will only be of value as adults. This is where we as adults fail collectively.

Safe spaces must be made available to children, particularly the CIRC, where they can openly discuss their issues and receive quality inputs. It is also a challenge to build sensitivity to handle children's issues. There are many cases where abuse begins in the family.

There are also ethical issues when dealing with children. It is critical to ponder upon what should be asked and how it should be put across.

Intense interaction is required to see how SDGs can be looked at from children's perspectives. To facilitate their meaningful involvement, they must first be informed and educated on the SDGs. Institutional review boards can help researchers to come with research topics that will help in monitoring the ethical issues. Ground level panels, participatory videos- these are means of direct interaction without mediation where we can hear their (children) views by engaging with them directly.

Neeta Goel stated that the SDGs entail 169 targets and 230 indicators. We need multidimensional data from the ground, as data helps to inform policy. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be collected since not all participants may be in a position to fill up a questionnaire.

This data needs to be shared in the public domain, especially information on CIRC. Organisations are working toward this, and studies are being conducted but they are not shared. Data must be shared in a format which is accessible and easy to understand.

She added that while designing evaluations, it is important to consider what data is appropriate for collection from children directly. Data must be collected using multiple data sources- primary (surveys), secondary (administrative) and innovative (satellite imagery). The comparability of indicators with national and global indicators needs to be considered. Further, collaborative survey designs and data collection can be undertaken with other stakeholders as well.

Roland Angerer talked about children living in difficult circumstances in Eastern and Southern Africa. His insights brought new learning on the table and can give new perspective to child rights activists in India to implement his experiences in the

Indian context. He shared example of Burundian refugees in Tanzania and effective protection mechanism that is helping children there. Plan International is the lead implementing partner of UNHCR for the sector of Child Protection. A key contribution and chief import of this is the need for child friendly spaces in refugee camps.

Talking about schooling of children in the region, he said that only 40% of the children are enrolled in schools, of which only 70% attend school daily. The ratio of boys to girls in secondary schools is 5:1.

He also shared that schools have no provision for menstrual hygiene and that their toilets are not gender safe. Moreover, parents are not very aware of the importance of educating the girl child. The poor economic state has also led to child marriage being a norm in the region; girls' families benefit from an economic incentive since they receive dowry. Further, a major cause of death among adolescent girls is complicated child birth.

As a part of Plan International's 18+ initiative, safe spaces for girls were created by organising football tournaments, and encouraging them to continue educating themselves even after marriage. Presently, there are 125 million child brides in Africa, a number that is expected to double by 2020 unless addressed urgently. The programme works with local religious/case/traditional leaders since they have influence in the community and can help stop child marriages. He discussed about the legal and policy environment in Malawi. There, they have taken steps to stop child marriage but as these steps are not in congruence with the constitution, the constitution is now being amended. He stressed that consistent work is required from all quarters.

Sharmishtha Basu said that there is a dearth of protective factors that curb violence against children. She added that more data needs to be collected to create resource materials which will help all stakeholders in this regard. Primary information is required from children, especially those living in difficult circumstances. Research question must be very strong and fill up an essential knowledge gap for the research.

The number and type of questions posed to children must be age appropriate. Age and sex of the interviewer is also very important- younger, same sex interviewers might help elicit critical answers. Sensitivity and the language used for interaction must also be duly considered. Counsellors should be brought on board for stress management for the interviewers as well as children being interviewed.

Pradeep Narayanan talked about evaluating programmes using a child rights programming framework. Though economic growth has doubled since 1991 in India, millions of children have been hit by the growing income disparity in the country. This has resulted in deprivation of basic services to these children. India missed critical MDG targets largely because of these reasons. Even now, we do not have proper datasets for children generally and specifically on CIDC, lack of data is an obstacle in measuring key metrics.

He stressed the need for a multidimensional approach to poverty assessment and shared that Plan India is proposing a three pronged approach to measuring the breadth, depth and severity of dimensions of child poverty. There should be triangulation of data from multiple sources to this end.

He added that child led evaluation processes are extremely critical. The absence of this will obtain a weaker evaluation result. Children can provide insights, experiences and views unique to their lived experiences. CRP (Child Rights Programming) dimension of change are broad and generic. It need to be applied to different contexts and at different levels for evolving intervention strategy. They could be administered for specific projects, sectorial reviews or reviewing the country strategy. Children can assess the programme impact by evaluating changes using indicators they develop.

He said that we all must be ready for change. Development organisations and other relevant stakeholders must embrace the CRP framework in all its manifestations in the programming. It is imperative to involve the primary stakeholders, children, in the entire process.

## Closing remarks by the chair

Tanya Barron extended thanks to the speakers and summed up the session. It is necessary to understand that CIDC programming is not a project with start and end date. Continuous work is required to

strive for the best. Numerous, exemplary policies may exist, but it all boils down to implementation. Various stakeholders need to work to ensure this.

# Closing Ceremony and Concluding Remarks on the Way Forward

The session marked the end of day three of the conference, but provided many reasons to believe it was a new start. A major achievement of the conference was bringing together stakeholders performing different role in governance and society, giving them time to pause and reflect on their work and what requires to be done from here on out. Deliberations also provided newer perspectives to policymakers for the road ahead. It is important to realise that CIDC is just not an abbreviation. It signifies millions of faceless children who are out on the streets and enduring several other vulnerabilities. They are just numbers, but individuals with equal right over the world's resources. If they are to live dignified lives and their dreams are to be realised, all stakeholders need to come together.

Andrew Sean Maguire (Executive Director, Global Influence and Partnerships, Plan International) said that the National Conference was built up from the grassroots, which gives it relevance and validity. But the bigger question is whether we have achieved anything. It is important to understand that SDGs are just not a set of goals; achieving these goals will help us shape a better future. If India does not meet SDGs, the world will not meet its targets.

He stated that there is a real lack of implementation of policies and various framework. There will always be lack of funds, but that cannot

be an excuse for not letting the work happen. Poor coordination between different organisations working toward the same goals will always act as an obstacle. This needs to be collectively addressed. He stressed on the role of data generation, citing that it is critical to have primary data across the country as it gives us ground to create a future plan of action.

Neha Siddiqui, (Secretary of Plan India's National Youth Advisory Panel) shared a newsletter 'Nai Awaaz' (New Voice) capturing the youth's learnings from the conference and major issues discussed. She shared that the youth are ready to work and take appropriate action. In conclusion, she stressed that the inclusion of young people in consultation and decision making process is very important to bring about sustainable development in the society.

Udayan Sen (Managing Partner Deloitte and Member, Plan Governing Board) released the India Declaration on the Plan for Every Child. He stated that the National Conference brought forth many new ideas to ponder upon.

The esteemed guests launched the CIDC network by unveiling a quilt with hand-written messages from participants captured during the three day conference. The quilt was made by women from communities served by Plan India. It symbolises the Plan India network which is comprised of diverse elements and their coming together.





# Way Forward

Plan India reaffirms its commitment to continue to strive to improve the situation of children in difficult circumstances by collaborating with regions, states and all organisations that have been part of this process. Together, we will positively impact the lives of millions of children. Plan India will take forward the outcome of the Plan for Every Child initiative with the following actions:

- The regional and national conference outcomes will be shared with different stakeholders to encourage them to take forward initiatives towards CIDC. Similarly, Plan India will focus on research and the creation of an evidence base to inform and guide planning and implementation with innovative solutions and use in the advocacy platform. Plan India will continue to work on the SDGs and track their development to further the cause, one that includes children's voices being reflected through child-led evaluation.
- Plan India will enhance its partners' capacities to facilitate an environment where children enjoy their own rights and are entitled to be

involved in their own development and protection, thereby eliminating the difficult circumstances faced by children especially girls.

- Plan India will also establish linkages with duty bearers to implement existing laws, policies and other services with utmost consistence and without delay in programme areas. In addition, it will also continue to engage with young people to achieve desired positive changes.
- Plan India has resolved to form a core committee at the National level with eminent professionals including regional partners (organizations who anchored regional conferences). The committee will meet once in every quarter to update the progress of network meetings, initiatives towards CIDC and future actions.
- The state, regional and national conferences on the Plan for Every Child initiative yielded a critical learning: it is essential to form CIDC networks at different levels to have an intensive discussion about CIDC with representation from different stakeholders from the government, corporates, NGOs, INGOs and UN bodies for coordination and joint accountability. This platform can be used to advocate with policy makers for increasingly relevant policies and legislation to protect children from vulnerabilities.





# Report on State Consultations and Regional Conferences

The idea behind conducting consultations and conferences across India was to bring focus to the most important issues relating to children living in difficult circumstances. The entire consultation had a two-pronged approach:

## The State Level Consultations

## Regional Conferences

Plan India developed a structured programme to conduct state level consultations in 28 states and four union territories. These states and union territories were divided into five regions- North, South, East, West and North East. Four institutions (CINI, AGS, GNK, SPYM) were given the responsibility of organising the State Level Consultations in the respective assigned states. Thereafter, they were to organise regional conferences with participation from state level participants among others. A total of five regional conferences were envisaged. These regional level consultations were to be merged in the proposed National Conference on CIDC in Delhi in the month of November, 2016.

## Idea behind the Conferences

The conferences were structured to involve, inform and influence issues relating to CIDC. Various stakeholders discussed ways in which they can work together to create a better tomorrow for the children.

## The Participants

The conferences had participation from multiple stakeholders, Plan India and its partners, government representatives, children and youth, UN bodies and international agencies, national level and state level children's rights coalitions, corporates and the media.

## Regional Partners

**Academy of Gandhian Studies (AGS) for South and Western regions:** AGS was founded in the year 1976. The Academy is currently providing leadership to a network of organisations spread across five states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal, Karnataka and Tami Nadu and working on contemporary issues of trafficking children and women, child trafficking for labour, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and WASH programmes.

**Gram Niyojan Kendra (GNK) for Northern region:** GNK was formed in 1976 and registered in January 1977. The goal of the Kendra is facilitating the process of development based on equality and social justice by empowering marginalised sections of the population, particularly women and children by initiating programmes in the areas of education, health, livelihood promotion, research and group formation for promoting self-action.

**Child in Need Institute (CINI) for Eastern region:** CINI is an Indian national level voluntary organisation reaching approximately five million people from poor, deprived and vulnerable communities of India over four decades. It is guided by its mission of sustainable development in health, nutrition, education and protection for children, adolescents and women in need.

**Society for Promotion of Youth and Masses (SPYM) for North-Eastern region:** SPYM is an Indian NGO with a countrywide presence in the areas of health and social development for close to three decades. The organisation focuses on empowering marginalised and vulnerable sections of society especially women and children facing myriad problems including drug dependence, HIV/AIDS, homelessness and so on.



# Key Messages from the State and Regional Conferences

The conferences held in various states and regions had participation from varied people and organisations working to ensure a better future for children in difficult circumstances.

From a larger perspective, discussions across the nation boiled down to a few specific points. For instance, child trafficking and child labour is an omnipresent issue. The situation is rather grim in the Eastern region. Census 2011 revealed that an

alarming 22% of total children in the age group of 5 to 14 years working in India were from the Eastern region. India ranks fifth among 84 countries on modern slavery or human trafficking index.

During the conferences, participants shared critical messages which are important to ponder upon as well as necessary to create a future action plan.

## Messages from Different Stakeholders

Voices of different Government delegates:

“It is important to focus on convergence between different sectors, especially the ideas of combining ICPS and ICDS to ensure greater and effective coverage.”  
(East)

“We should all be concerned about the way children are pushed into difficult circumstances and their childhood and life is wasted.”  
(West)

“We are planning to form an organization that focuses on the CIDC with the support of CSOs.”  
(South)

“It is striving to become accountable and transparent and seek suggestions on the existing issues around CIDC.”  
(North)

“The categories of CIDC cannot be separated as they are interrelated. Mainstreaming and collaboration required between the Ministry, State and CSOs at the grassroots with the bottom-up approach.”  
(North-East)

Voices of different Civil Society Organisations and Corporate delegates:

“There is a greater need to redraw the nuanced advocacy and lobbying strategies to improve the quality of education and ensure that child labour once admitted are retained in the schools.”  
(South)

“A comprehensive survey of all the issues concerning CIDC must be undertaken.”  
(North-East)

“CSR initiatives to become more comprehensive and sustainable as well as expand into capacity building and sphere of influence.”  
(East)

“Adhere to the general principles of child rights which provide a framework for all actions concerning CIDC – policies, legislation and schemes.”  
(North)

“CSOs need to exchange among themselves on best practices. The programme design to be child friendly and amendable to multiple funding sources.”  
(West)

# Prioritised Issues Discussed in the Conferences

During the conferences, it also emerged that every region has specific issues to deal with due to a specific socio-economic background. A priority issue in the South may not be an issue of priority for the North-Eastern. It is important to prioritise issues for every region and create specific strategies to tackle them.

## Northern Region

**Child Marriage:** The issue of child marriage is of grave concern in the Northern region of the country. In Rajasthan, 57.6% of women in the age group of 20-24 were married before the legal age of marriage. This is highest in the country. In Uttar Pradesh, the numbers are a staggering 54.9%, followed by 28% in Haryana.

Child Marriage is often a disguised form of child trafficking. There is a severe lack of sensitisation and awareness about the laws and acts among the families and children. There is a need to conduct comprehensive research about the root causes of child marriage. The social and cultural mind set of marriage being a critical milestone in a girl's life needs to be challenged, with emphasis laid on their financial independence instead.

CSOs can play a crucial role in apprising government authorities of real statistics due to their on-ground presence.

It is crucial to identify the role of Panchayats in mapping vulnerable girls and implementing measures like 'Balika Shivar' (residential girls' learning camp) to sensitise girls about their rights.

There is also a concern around the large gap between the actual occurrences of child marriages and the number of cases reported. There is a need to assess the real spread of problems through secondary researches and establish credible numbers to measure it.

**Child Labour:** A total of 4.3 million children in India work as child labourers. Of all the states, Uttar Pradesh ranks highest with 1.8 million children between the age group of 5 to 14 years as child labourers, followed by Rajasthan.

Rapid urbanisation, migration and the shrinking formal economy as well as growing informal sector is increasing the causality of child labour, thereby pushing children into difficult circumstances and

depriving them of their rights. There is a need for speedy disposal of cases related to child labour so that punishments awarded can act as a deterrent.

There is a concern around the new Child Labour Act making the child more vulnerable. As labour is a manifestation of other issues, it is imperative to bring other laws and provisions to understand why child is engaged in labour and how this synergetic approach could reduce child's vulnerability.

It is also observed that there is a low prioritisation of matters relating to child labour by administration and police.

**Child Trafficking:** Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have the highest number of trafficking cases. These states are also destination as well as transit for child trafficking. Children are trafficked for labour, sex trade and agriculture work. Punjab and Haryana present numerous cases of children engaged in agricultural labour. Marriage and job opportunity are means to do child trafficking, which becomes more rampant in disaster hit areas.

**Girls as Victims of Violence:** Gender discrimination is a deeply rooted phenomena in all northern states. Even after improvement from the 2001 census performance, Haryana and Punjab present the lowest child sex ratio followed by Jammu and Kashmir which demonstrated a decline in child sex ratio.

Sexual Violence against children is prevalent in states with weak systems to address and provide care and support to victims.

It is observed that there is a greater decline in Child Sex Ratio in rural areas than in urban areas as per the Census 2011, due to female foeticide. Stricter implementation of law and social mobilisation can help bring about positive changes.

It was also found that government, law enforcement and legal authorities are lacking in the implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994 in many places.

## Western Region

**Children's vulnerability to Sexual Violence:** It has been found that every second child was being subjected to one or more forms of sexual abuse.

2.8 million people are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation annually, of which 40% are children. 28,982 children in Maharashtra and 8,598 children in Gujarat are living with HIV/ AIDS. Madhya Pradesh accounted for 9.6% of total crimes reported in the country. The state reported 13.8% (5,076 out of 36,735 cases) of total rape cases in the country, and accounted for the highest crime rate against children (16.9 per cent).

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) leads to multiple vulnerabilities, and the processes that follow make a child even more vulnerable. The law will not work unless both the society and system are sensitive. Reporting the case can, at times, have serious implications on the victims and witness protection. There is an urgent need to make provisions for long term counselling for CSA.

There is a need to look at the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, as registering the case under POCSO has both advantages and disadvantages.

Goa has emerged as the sex tourism capital in India. This issue needs to be addressed, and there needs to be proper planning to rescue children from the web of trafficking.

**Street Connected Children and Child Labour:** All street connected children need to be treated as right holders. 8,228,481 children in the age group of 5 to 14 years are engaged in labour. Maharashtra accounts for 11.4% of total child labour in the country; 6.6% in Madhya Pradesh; and 5.8% in Gujarat.

**Displaced and Migrant Children:** There are two types of migration- permanent and seasonal. There is a need to differentiate between migrants settled in cities and seasonal migrants. All agro-industries and construction material production are seasonal activities. In Maharashtra, there is large scale seasonal migration.

Children who migrate without their parents are an extremely vulnerable population. Fair inclusion of migrant children under the ambit of RTE is a challenge. National policy or legislation does not address the issue of internal displacement i.e. displacement of labour within the district or the state, though it forces them to leave their houses, amenities etc. and also children's education.

The real problem is with the lack of legal provisions for migrants. Lack of access to entitlements, health and education, is an issue. The law is necessary to safeguard migrants and provide them with entitlements. Children of migrants may accompany their parents, however, they drop-out of school and subsequently are deleted from school registers due to their absence.

**Marriage:** 30% of women (currently between the ages of 20 and 24 years) were married before the

age of 18 in Madhya Pradesh; 25.1% in Maharashtra; and 9.8% in Goa.

Incidence of child marriage across social groups is statistically correlated with wealth quintile and education of women. In rural areas of Gujarat, child marriage is strongly associated with caste membership (UNICEF). Police officials face resistance from the communities in cases relating to child marriages, however NGOs working with local communities can bridge this gap.

Child marriage violates a range of inter-connected women's rights, such as equality on grounds of sex and age, achieving the highest attainable standards of health, freedom from slavery, access to education, freedom of movement, freedom from violence, reproductive rights, and the right to consensual marriage.

## East er n Region

**Missing and Trafficked Children:** The region is a hub for child trafficking in the country. It was discussed that the government, administration and CSOs need to work proactively and closely together to ensure that trafficking issue is tackled in the region.

National Crime Records Bureau (2014) data showed that 61 per cent of total human trafficking crimes in India were committed in the eastern region. Also, of the total children in the eastern region who went missing, an average 48% remained untraced.

**Child Labour:** Participants reiterated the importance of a multi-pronged approach. Shashi Panja (Minister in Charge, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of West Bengal) shared that employers' associations, trade unions and such actors needed to be engaged in the process. She also spoke about specific initiatives combating child labour including one highlighting interstate convergence for protecting seasonal migrants and their children.

Census 2011 revealed that an alarming 22% of total children in the age range of 5 to 14 years working in India were from the eastern region. The highest number of child labourers in Eastern Region comes from Bihar and West Bengal. The percentage share of child labour in Bihar has increased to 10% in 2011 from 8.8% in 2001.

**Child Marriage:** Roshni Sen (IAS, Secretary, Departments of Child Development, Women Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal) noted that child marriage constituted one of the worst forms of exploitation for girls. She also spoke of the West Bengal state government's Kanyashree scheme which incentivised access to education for girls as a key strategy for preventing child marriages.



National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) data showed that 46% of women in the age range of 20 to 24 years were married before the age of 18 in the eastern region. Bihar and Jharkhand were at the top of the table with 69% and 63.2 per cent. This was an issue of concern in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh as well. Additionally, 32% of men in the age range of 25 to 29 years were married before the age of 21 in the region.

## South Eastern Region

**Child Labour:** Despite numerous commitments to the contrary, child labour continues to be a serious issue. South India ranks first in the prevalence of child labour as per Census 2011. With respect to the percentage share of child labour across southern states, Andhra Pradesh accounts for a larger share of about 10.8% of the child workforce in India followed by Karnataka with 6.5% and Tamil Nadu with 3.3%. NSSO data 2010-11 reveals that work participation rates for children in the age group of 5 to 9 years is less than one percent in all states. However, the WPR for children in the age group of 10 to 14 years remains higher ranging from less than one percent in Kerala to 12.38% in Andhra Pradesh.

The causative factors are poverty, lack of educational attainment and societal acceptance of the practice of child labour. Children are deprived of basic rights and their potential for education and intellectual development is reduced. They are vulnerable to exploitation and face grave threats to their health.

India has several progressive acts and programmes to prevent, rehabilitate child labour. However, there are some gaps in the implementation. The lack of birth registration and age proof results in ineffective implementation of labour laws and there is a grey area between child labour and child work.

Accessing quality education for all children and preventing dropouts is a challenge.

**Child Marriage:** In India, child marriage has been declared illegal for more than 80 years. Marriage before the age of 18 is a fundamental violation of human rights. However, its continued prevalence has made it a long-standing concern of policy makers and implementers. Per NFHS-4, women (currently between the ages of 20 to 24 years) married before the age of 18 is as high as 35.5% in Andhra Pradesh. With wide variations across states, this statistic ranges from 25.7% in Telangana, 23.2 in Karnataka, 15.7 in Tamil Nadu to 10.7% in Puducherry.

In general, child/early marriage can be attributed to a complex set of socio-economic factors including poverty, tradition and parental desire to protect daughters from unwanted sexual advances. In

India, nearly 50% of girls are married before the legal age. The causes are poverty, poor quality of education, patriarchy and a parental desire to protect daughters from unwanted sexual advances. There is a lack of information on the law and how to access it. Both the community and the implementers give importance to traditions and customary laws.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 does not declare all child marriages null and void; they remain legally valid unless either of the parties wishes to nullify it. Moreover, Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) hold additional responsibilities professionally and neglect child marriage issues.

**Child Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation:** India is a source, transit and destination country for trafficking, both internal (90%) and external. Child marriage is often a route for trafficking of young girls for sexual exploitation. Out of three million women and girls engaged as sex workers in India, 40% are minors. Trafficking of girls is high in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for transit into the four metropolitan cities and the state of Goa.

The causes are similar to those of child labour: poverty, frequent natural disasters and migration. Dysfunctional families where child faces abuse, domestic violence and low perceived value and status of girl children also abet child trafficking.

It is important to increase awareness about the various interventions of the Government. That being said, there are still lot required. For e.g. shelter homes for girls who have been rescued from trafficking or labour are grossly inadequate across all the states

**Children in Disasters:** 70% of the people affected by disasters are children. Children are prone to higher risk of disease and have no health care, adequate water or sanitation facilities or access to education. This is because immediate relief is not child centric. The needs of pregnant mothers and adolescent girls are also not met.

The long term impact of disasters manifest in trafficking, sexual violence, false adoption, commercial sexual exploitation, family separation, early marriage, child labour and psychological trauma.

The National Disaster Mitigation Policy – 2016 offers a ray of hope and has the potential of positively impacting the lives of children during disasters.

## North-Eastern Region

**Children with Substance Use Disorders:** The region has become a hub for consumption of drugs along with trafficking. The drugs used most

commonly in the state are: Heroin, Cannabis, Charas, Ganja, Marijuana and Bhang, among others, with a high instance of inhalants and injection drug use. In Nagaland, HIV prevalence among drug addicts using injections is about 20%, and the state has the highest number of PLHAs in the country.

Easy availability of drugs, poverty, lack of parental guidance, peer pressure, emotional stress, truancy among students, and ineffectiveness of laws against drug trafficking and peddling are among reasons for high percentage of drug abuse among children.

Children who are dropouts or come from disturbed families are more prone to drug abuse, and often start to steal or peddle drugs to fund their drug habit. They are thus caught in a vicious cycle and have little or no means to escape it due to a lack of rehabilitation facilities.

As per NCRB data, of the total cases filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, 10% of cases were from this region in 2015.

**Child Victims of Sexual Violence:** Customary laws (specific to certain community where social belief is not aligned to law) create obstacles and hindrances in the delivery of justice through a well-established judiciary in the North East.

Sexual abuse and violence against children has become a matter of national concern. It is considered taboo to discuss sexual abuse in society or within a community. Families of victims often try to silence such cases to prevent stigma and safeguard the dignity of the victim as well as their own.

It was unanimously recommended that intensive orientation regarding POCSO and JJ Act at community level could help reduce the stigma associated with reporting such offences since families often refrain from reporting due to lack of confidentiality and privacy which are mandatorily ensured in the POCSO and JJ Act.

As per the Right to Education Act, 2009, no educational institution, including government aided schools or private schools, can deny admission to any child on grounds of discrimination. However, it was highlighted that victims of sexual violence often face stigma and discrimination and are often denied access to education in education institutions as well.

**Children Living with HIV/AIDS:** Government supported healthcare, the public distribution system, and Anganwadis are almost non-functional across the North- East, particularly in the hilly districts. Children who are HIV-positive are practically left to fend for themselves, often with mothers who are infected as well. Besides the

scarcity of hospitals, the lack of public transport further acts as a barrier in accessing services, particularly medication (Anti-Retroviral Therapy, or ART). Children affected by HIV/AIDS are not only deprived of care, love and support but are also denied manifestation of their basic right to live.

Abandonment of children by family after the demise of legal guardians/parents of children living with HIV/AIDS was also reported during deliberations. Children are often denied inheritance of property to which they are legally entitled and immediate steps on the part of government to address this issue were recommended.

**Children Affected by Violence/Insurgency/Trafficking:** In the North- East, tribal clashes occur between various tribes (300 or more persons were affected in recent (2015) ethnic clashes). In this time, many North Eastern tribal girls are trafficked to Haryana and Punjab, as evidenced by numerous monthly news reports. In the border areas of Garo Hills in Meghalaya, many girls are trafficked with the hope of employment opportunities in Guwahati. The girl child is highly vulnerable to trafficking, however, no specific data to suggest its prevalence is available at the state or regional level.

The Myanmar, Bangladesh and China border areas of the North-East region are highly neglected in terms of education, thus contributing to the high incidence of violence/trafficking/insurgency.

Children are also trafficked for insurgency (as child soldiers), particularly in Manipur and Nagaland. Poor parents are entangled in prevailing socio-economic conditions, forcing them to send their children to other states for a better livelihood. If the children fall into the hands of traffickers, they are kept in illegal homes, deprived of proper food and clothes and are often forced into the flesh trade.

**Children with Disability and Mental Health Issues:** Shelter homes and child care institutions are inadequately equipped to deal with children suffering from mental health issues. Moreover, no separate facility is available to cater to this population. The handful of services available is limited to adults in Government hospitals, but those too are inefficient in the absence of well trained staff.

Being unaware of this issue, communities and larger society can be highly discriminatory, which acts as a barrier for families afflicted by mental health issues to seek support. Marginalised, abandoned and orphaned children with mental health issues remain a hidden population.

Delays in diagnosis also lead to progression of diseases further resulting in other co-morbid disorders such as substance abuse and anti-social behaviour.

# Region Wise Significant Best Practices

The best practices guideline provided by Plan India, International set the premise of the selection. The guidelines underlined effectiveness, scale of the project, ethical soundness, cost effectiveness, relevance, reliability, innovativeness, social integration, sustainability and mechanism of evaluation as the basis of selection of best practice. Some of the best practices were:

## Northern Region

**PANI, Ambedkarnagar, UP:** Here, child marriage was prevalent and well accepted. It was felt that the daunting task of stopping these marriages could only be attempted through group solidarity, empowering both girls and boys to be change agents in their community. Children were made to realise the criticality of the issue and provided with training on various creative expressions like drawing, theatre, writing etc. Children formed groups at village, panchayat and block levels to raise awareness and stop such occurrences.

**PRAYAS Juvenile Aid Centre (JAC) Society, Delhi:** A child focused development organisation for marginalised children has created a strong foothold in advocacy by sharing the evidence that it created through its work. It enjoys membership in around 25 various government bodies and Task Forces of different Ministries. It has also advocated for stronger legislations for protecting the children. It has contributed to the formulation of Indian government policy, including the Juvenile Justice Act and the Offences against Children Act..

## Western Region

**Special Cell for Women and Children:** An excellent example of collaboration, it is an effort aimed at eliminating violence against women and children. It is a service provided to women survivors by trained social workers, strategically located in the police system. The location within the police station leads to a more coordinated, coherent and in-depth response to issues by integrating quality psycho-socio-legal services within the police

system. The first Special Cell for Women and Children was established in 1984 as a strategic collaboration between Bombay Police and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

The Special Cells' mission is to work towards ensuring that women and children are recognised as individuals with equal rights and opportunities in society, including the opportunity to live a peaceful, violence-free life. The collaboration of the Special Cell and the Police, resulting in synergy from their differential strengths and contributions, enriches systemic response into a coordinated, multi-agency response to the issue. Interventions are made, within the social work practice framework and with a pro-woman and child perspective.

**Dnyana Devi, Pune:** The organisation developed a broad strategy to deal with the issue of child marriage. It engaged in the rescue of victims and apprehension of culprits; community education; empowerment of girl child through adolescent programmes; sensitisation of legal machinery; and building intercity/ interstate linkages. These strategies helped in addressing the gaps in programme, implementation and policy. There was a change in attitudes of police and society. Moreover, girls were able to take a stand against forced marriages. The major achievements by following above strategies include effective prevention of child marriages, proactive policing and attitudinal change in communities.

## Eastern Region

**The Department of Labour Resources – Government of Bihar, has instituted a 'State Plan of Action for Elimination, Release and Rehabilitation of Child Labour' which is guided by the following:**

- Indian constitutional and legal provisions
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child-1989 Conventions and recommendations of ILO National Policy on Child Labour
- National Plan of Action for Children Directions of the Supreme Court of India



It works to strengthen the tracking of rescued child labourers. There is a provision for a one-time-grant of INR 25,000 to every rescued child labour. The plan promotes the formation of 'Child friendly Villages'.

## Southern Region

**Compulsory Registration of Marriage:** For the effective prohibition of child marriage, compulsory registration of marriage is a necessity. It is in this context that in 2006, the Supreme Court directed the Centre and all State Governments to frame and notify rules for the compulsory registration of marriage within three months. In terms of implementation, Andhra Pradesh has enacted laws mandating compulsory registration of marriage; and Tamil Nadu has modified the existing laws governing marriage and / or have issued rules to stipulate compulsory registration.

## Northeastern Region

**Child Friendly Guwahati (CFG), Assam,** an Initiative by Snehalaya, Don Bosco, Guwahati, Assam: The programme comprises of counselling, picnics, group activities, academic education and other co-curricular and cultural activities to prepare and mainstream children into formal schools. Staff in each of the centres visit the community on a daily basis and establish rapport with community leaders, parents of the children and mobilise out-of-school children so they are integrated into the formal school system. At present, there are 25 centres under the CFG project.

The project is an innovation as it relies on and makes maximum use of locally available community resources. Community centres, un-utilised halls, school classrooms during afternoon hours and other such un-utilised facilities are often used by Snehalaya within the community to run the project.

**Rehabilitating drug using children in Mizoram,** An initiative by Light for Comprehensive Development (LiFCoDe), Aizawl, Mizoram: The organisation provides a 30-bed facility for victims of substance abuse, both girls and boys. Moses Zofaka during his presentation mentioned that many of these children have co-morbid issues like Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant disorder, Depression, Anxiety disorders, ADHD etc., and a multi-sector approach towards treatment is followed.

Intervention begins with detoxification period which varies up to 15 days, followed by Primary Care (60 days) and Midway Care (4-6 months). Children at the centre are provided life skills education and efforts are made to develop their literacy. They are also provided vocational training with a view to enable their rehabilitation. In addition to therapy and counselling for children, the centre also provides family intervention programmes to facilitate smooth transition of the child back into the family. After discharge from the centre, follow up is conducted on a quarterly basis and after care services are provided up to two years after release from the centre.

## High Level of Significant Commitments

The conferences in various regions called upon the state, national government and all agencies working for and with CIDC to promote and protect the rights of children with the following commitments:

- To respect and ensure the rights of each child in our country without discrimination.
- To preserve and enhance awareness and positive attitudes towards children in difficult circumstances among all stakeholders and to contribute to their well-being.
- To adhere to the general principles of child rights – the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation, survival and development, which provide the framework for all action concerning CIDC including policies, legislation and schemes.
- State and national government strengthened availability and effective allocation of financial resources exclusively meant for the needs of CIDC and optimum utilisation of the budget for the well-being of vulnerable children.
- To take all appropriate measures for the achievement of rights through the design of robust monitoring systems in the country and enhanced responsibilities and accountability.
- To build effective partnerships between government and CSOs to make best use of the capacities and motivation of CSOs, media, corporate bodies and other stakeholders for the high-level commitment to promote and protect the rights of CIDC.

## Nor t her n r egion

- The regional conference called upon the state, national government and all agencies working for and with CIDC to promote and protect their rights with the following commitments.
- To respect and ensure the rights of each child in the country without discrimination.
- To preserve and enhance awareness and positive attitudes towards children in difficult circumstances among all stakeholders and to contribute to their well-being.
- To adhere to the general principles of child rights – the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation, survival and development, which provide the framework for all action concerning CIDC including policies, legislation and schemes.
- State and national government strengthened availability and effective allocation of financial resources exclusively meant for the needs of CIDC and optimum utilization of the budget for the well-being of vulnerable children.

## West er n Region

- To work for child friendly governance system where there is space for addressing children's grievances and making tourism sector more responsive to children concerns and priorities.
- Need for training and capacity building for all government officials.
- System to supervise monitoring of unsupervised children.
- Increased coordination and responsibility of communities in creating a child friendly environment.
- Evidence-based policy deliberation and formulation towards the creation of child friendly policies.
- Need to look at POCSO Act and other legal instruments in dealing with child sexual exploitation.
- To establish seasonal hostels and mobile schools for migrant children in order to provide them with opportunity to learn, when their parents migrate.

- To ensure effective law enforcement in partnership with the government and CSOs, with the latter playing a facilitator's role.
- Incorporate more integrated processes to map displaced children by providing them with universal identification through the use of a centralised process of identification i.e., like that of Aadhaar Card.
- Sensitise government officials on various aspects of migrant and displaced children such as their requirement of education, living facilities.
- The rehabilitation and resettlement plans of development projects should have specific component for children to make sure that their education, shelter and other basic amenities are not affected or properly provisioned.
- Ensure coverage of migrant children and labourers and their wellbeing in the formulation of inter–state policies.
- Ensure enrolment of migrant and displaced children using RTE; conduct school-based awareness programmes on the rights of children. Increase awareness among children and parents by conducting programmes in communities as well.
- Facilitate the formation of adolescent girls' groups and organise capacity building programme in line with their interests, issues and aspirations.
- Ensure the health department is held responsible and accountable. Organise health awareness camps focusing on the ill effects of early child marriage and sex education
- Address data gaps by initiating systematic data collection from gram panchayat level so real picture could be reflected;
- Propagate government schemes and benefits and increase awareness on the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders engaged in health and child protection systems
- Increase rights awareness among tribal communities bound by customary laws

Address issues of coordination in child line at district and block level as there are operation issues related to work area and liaison with government.. A viable option is creating coordination committees at the block level.

## East er n r egion

- Prioritise and increase per capita expenditure on children, particularly CIDC.
- Focus on ensuring right to identity for all CIDC.
- Assign greater priority on understanding and addressing mental health issues affecting CIDC.
- Focus greater attention on children with disabilities, particularly girls. There is a need to invest in enhancing capacities of various stakeholders who can support them. Further, the establishment of special schools must be considered as a key step.
- Enhance attention and actions for adolescent girls who remain particularly vulnerable due to their social context.
- Review and enhance supportive measures for working parents of children below three years of age. Focus on continuum of support for children on the threshold of adulthood (i.e. 17 to 18 years), particularly when they do not have families.
- Explore means to enhance institutional care systems with increased human resources – emphasis must lie on developing SOPs and other guides in simple and accessible language.
- Strengthen child protection planning systems, particularly at district and block levels.
- Promote the use of report cards and other means for robust monitoring of schemes and services and tracking performance aligned to SDGs.
- Develop and utilise vibrant, attractive and engaging advertisements/campaigns to promote child rights.
- Promote programming on enhancing parent to child communication, particularly among vulnerable families.
- Utilise integrated case management approach in trainings of police, CWCs, JJBs, DCPUs, CCI personnel and others.
- Create greater awareness about the provision of free and competent legal aid for children.
- Promote dialogue on child sexual abuse and greater and effective use of The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012.
- Conduct legal awareness camps in schools and communities.

- Learning from the Chhattisgarh Placement Agencies Act, bring in legislations to regulate placement agencies in other states as well.
- Examine the rapidly growing skill enhancing, training institutes to ensure that these do not serve as conduits for trafficking for forced labour.
- Promote sensitisation efforts with media to ensure sensitive reporting that also complies with legal aspects (i.e. not disclosing identities).
- Step up engagement with corporates involved in CSR initiatives moving beyond infrastructural and material support.

## Sout her n Region

- Work with and support the efforts of the government in building a child labour free society including the critical engagement to expose the lapses/gaps in policy and practice.
- Prioritise and or adopt child labour free indicators in all development interventions.
- Build the capacity of local governments (PRIs, ULBs) in working for child labour free communities.
- Contribute to building vibrant learning sharing mechanisms to mainstream best practices and to influence and strengthen larger government interventions.
- Create mandatory provisions that require all district authorities to identify child labour hot spots and develop local, specific strategies for time bound elimination of child labour practices.
- School education, poverty alleviation, livelihood development and social security programmes must be redesigned and converged to ensure inclusive approach to all children facing the potential risk of being pushed into child labour.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure good coordination and convergence among various structures dealing with children's rights issues, namely SCPCR (state Commission for Protecting Children's Rights), Human Rights Commission, Legal Services Authority, etc.
- Considering that the Amended CLPRA Bill, 2016 permits children to be engaged in family occupation/enterprises including of relatives (uncle/aunt, etc.), the state governments should develop an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure that children enjoy their childhood and are prevented from vulnerability to exploitation.



- Ensuring proper utilisation of welfare funds for construction labour by constructing housing facilities/temporary shelters/transit homes and facilities for child care and recreation, etc.
- Accountability of the teachers shall be ensured in a manner that ensures realisation of the right of every child to an education.
- Support the State to conduct research to better understand the situation of CIDC and improve data for evidence based implementation of service delivery.
- Undertake appraisals and monitoring of stakeholders based on provision of resources, services and overall competency.

## Nor t h-East er n Region

- Establish a Regional Resource Centre that focuses on dealing with CIDC, including victims of violence, equipped with in-house expertise and where linkages and coordination across all North Eastern States can be maintained to render efficient and effective services.
- Support each state to have access to adequate centres to effectively meet the needs of children affected by issues of violence.
- Implement life skill training programmes among concerned functionaries and children at the grass root level. Conduct skill development training for staffers to enable better outcomes of service delivery among children for child empowerment and better recovery from trauma.
- Promote a 'Top-to-Bottom' approach for all personnel to ensure the following: (1) Better linkages and coordination between all stakeholders (2) a more proactive and sensitised Government response (3) on-going advocacy programmes with law enforcement agencies (4) cases related to CIDC be disposed of at the earliest (5) CIDC would be properly rehabilitated based on their needs.
- Promote female police volunteers as they can enhance the information network to assist in the checking of trafficking issues raised by concerned members of society
- Ensure that quality and free education is available for all the children under RTE (Right to Education 2005).

# Regional Conference Outcome:

## Recommendations for Programming

- Strengthen Child Protection Planning systems at block and district levels.
- Promote the use of report cards and other means for robust monitoring of schemes and services. Track performance aligned with SDGs.
- Strengthen case management processes
- Legal Aid programming
- Ensure the enforcement of POCSO Act 2012
- Promote sensitisation efforts with the media to ensure sensitive reporting, compiled with legal aspects (i.e. not disclosing identities)
- Engagement of corporates towards causes and programmes pertinent to CIDC

### Areas for Research

- Reviewing ICPS from the CIDC perspective
- CIDCs and Law – reviewing existing legislations
- Issues of children who identify as transgender
- Mapping of institutions providing care, protection and rehabilitation services for CIDC – collating and consolidating existing such resources for easy accessibility
- Database/directory of organisations working on CIDC related issues
- Use of social media in promoting children's issues
- Exploring, understanding and practice of seeing children in conflict with the law in need of care and protection as well because these are also children and need special support.

### Future Action by Plan India

- Plan India will bring together findings from 28 states and four union territories about the top

categories of CIDC in all the regions along with recommendations that have emerged for relevant stakeholders like CSOs and state and national governments.

- There needs to be a deeper analysis of all the recommendations and how they can be implemented effectively.
- The end consolidated findings will to be shared with stakeholders at various levels from government to grassroots CSOs to facilitate the process of better policy making and designing of more effective programmes and interventions.
- Bolster the network with the collective strength of organisations and people assembled during the conferences.
- Currently, Plan India partners are engaged in programmes related to VOCSET, slum/street-connected children and migrants. The learning from the consultations will be used to expand outreach.
- Effective engagement with the government to ensure they adhere to recommendations put forth. Plan India and other institutions and agencies will collate recommendations and make joint efforts to influence government, thereby positively impacting the lives of CIDC. We need to work with the government by looking for opportunities and pro-actively engaging for the causes of CIDC.
- Address the lack of coherent and consensual definition of CIDC by bringing together information, ideas and suggestions collated across regional conferences.
- Ensure that the findings of the all the regional conferences go on to inform the government in the finalisation of the National Plan of Action for Children and while formulating other policies for children.

# Conclusion

The two-step, and multi-pronged approach of state level consultations and regional conferences brings forth a need to bring together all the loose information for a concrete definition of CIDC, and a much-needed collaborative approach on the part of government, judiciary, CSOs, industries and communities.

It was felt that the state consultation was successful in reaching out to a large number of NGOs, and in the process, hearing out a whole range of thoughts, perceptions and experiences all over India where the issues and concerns of CIDC were collectively articulated.

The consultations have provided a clearer direction on CIDC, that is, scaling up of the work to reach out to as many children as possible through various means: partners of Plan-India, CSO networks and the government. Plan India will explore working with a whole gamut of actors such as the government machinery, judiciary, CSOs, CSR and other stakeholders. Efforts will be made to work with government on implementation of laws and provisions. Organisation is also going to engage in evidence based advocacy at scale, thereby necessitating concerted focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks.

While the government needs to ensure stricter implementation of laws, enhance infrastructural support by strengthening rehabilitation processes, creating adequate shelter homes, increasing trained and sensitised manpower and conducting monitoring and evaluation, they also need to collaborate with CSOs to obtain an accurate on-ground picture and solicit support to rise above regional differences. Some industries and related bodies have shouldered responsibility towards children related issues, but there is a need to integrate them further through efforts with the government and CSOs. Lastly, the work of CSOs cuts across various levels. It is preventive (working at the grassroots with the community, parents and schools), curative (challenging and uprooting sociological factors of issues) and palliative (to consolidate learnings through small interventions and then advocate for suitable structural changes at the policy level) in nature, thus empowering communities and families to take responsibility for the safety and betterment of their own children.

The consolidation of experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders across five regions and will lead to better collaboration and improved outcomes for CIDC.





The consultations have provided a clearer direction on QDC, that is, scaling up of the work to reach out to as many children as possible through various means











## About Plan India

Plan India, a member of Plan International Federation, is a nationally registered independent child development organisation committed to creating a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, their families and communities. For over 35 years, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children by providing them access to protection, basic education, proper healthcare, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives.



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