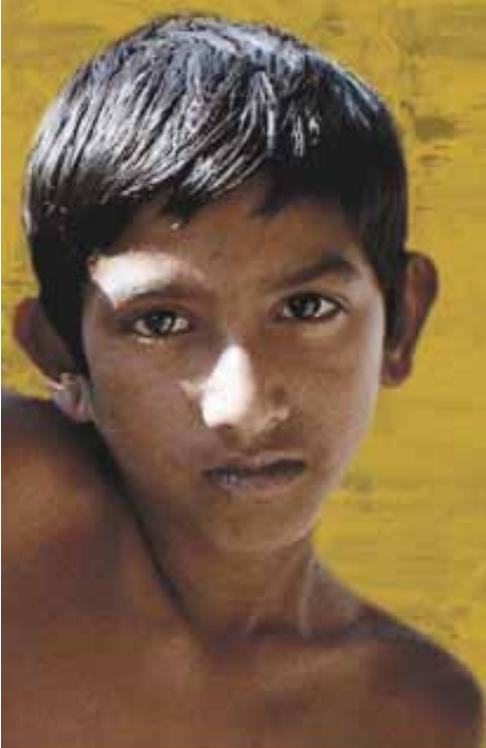




# VOICES and ACTIONS

of Girls and Boys to end  
Violence against Children  
in South and Central Asia

*In preparation of  
UN Study on Violence against Children*



**Save the Children**





**VOICES**  
**and ACTIONS**  
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*UN Study on Violence against Children*

Supported by  
Save the Children Sweden  
Regional Office for South and Central Asia

Save the Children fights for children's rights.  
We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children's lives worldwide.

Save the Children works for:

- a world which respects and values each child
- a world which listens to children and learns
- a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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# Contents

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>V</b>
<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>IX</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	<b>XI</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>XIII</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN .....	2
REPRODUCTION OF VIOLENCE .....	3
WORKING AGAINST VIOLENCE FROM A CRP PERSPECTIVE .....	5
<b>2 PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>3 ANALYSIS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN THE REGION</b> ...	<b>11</b>
3.1 PHYSICAL AND DEGRADING/HUMILIATING PUNISHMENTS .....	11
3.2 CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE .....	19
3.3 COMMERCIAL AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (INCLUDING TRAFFICKING) OF BOYS AND GIRLS ...	23
3.4 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE .....	26
3.5 CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW .....	31
<b>4 RECOMMENDATIONS BY CHILDREN</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>5 CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>ANNEX 1: STATEMENT BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>ANNEX 2: YOUNG SOUTH ASIANS ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>43</b>



# Preface

The UN General Assembly decided to request the Secretary General to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children. The General Assembly reaffirmed its request and encouraged the Secretary General to appoint an independent expert to direct the study. As a result, on 12 February 2003, the Secretary General appointed Paulo Sergio Pinheiro to undertake the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

The study, to be carried out in collaboration with OHCHR, UNICEF and WHO, will provide an in-depth global picture of violence against children and propose clear recommendations for the improvement of legislation, policy and programmes related to the prevention of and responses to violence against children.

Save the Children has committed to contribute significantly in the forthcoming UN Study on Violence Against Children from a Child Rights Programming (CRP) approach. This implies addressing the root cause of violence and addressing unequal power structures (for example, patriarchal structures) and power relations including those between children and adults, placing children at the centre and recognising them as right holders and social actors. It also implies recognising governments as primary duty bearers accountable for addressing and taking action against violence. A CRP approach further implies giving priority to girls and boys, while disseminating child-friendly information against violence, discrimination, gender relations and sexuality.

The scope of the study covers violence against children within families and homes, in schools, both private and state care and residential institutions, workplaces, detention facilities and prisons, on the streets, as perpetrated by law enforcement agencies and the use of capital and physical punishment. The CRC committee recommended that violence should include all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, including sexual abuse, bullying in schools and physical and degrading/humiliating punishment. Save the Children's vision for the study is: "To influence the study to develop an international strategy to reduce violations against children". To serve this purpose, the Save the Children Alliance Task Group has been formed, which works solely to influence the study on identified issues that have been drawn from Save the Children's experience.

Children's meaningful and ethical participation is an overall and crosscutting priority in addressing violence affecting girls and boys from various backgrounds. The core purpose of their participation is to empower them as individuals and as members of civil society. Giving children space to participate will involve giving them a genuine opportunity to express their views, be involved in decisions or take action.

This document will be used for strengthening Save the Children's existing work and promoting participation of girls and boys on projects against violence that affects their daily lives. It is hoped that a child-friendly version will soon be produced to use in national and regional consultations. In addition, Save the Children has produced a film made by children that complements this publication, highlighting voices of children while giving examples of their actions and recommendations to stop violence.

I would like to thank the regional UN Study focal persons and their counterparts and the regional 'Children, Citizenship and Governance' focal persons for their contributions in bringing out this very important document.

I would also like to thank Ravi Karkara and the Child Participation Working Group for this innovative piece of work. I also acknowledge Lena Karlsson for her support against violence inflicted on children in the region.

**Lisa Lundgren**

Regional Representative  
Save the Children Sweden  
South and Central Asia

# Foreword

Save the Children has a long experience of consulting with children, listening to what they have to say and taking into account their views and opinions on issues and decisions that impact on their lives. During such consultations boys and girls around the world have expressed time and time again that violence is a key issue in their daily lives. They have also expressed that something be done urgently to prevent and combat such violence. In recognition of the fact that violence is one of children's priority concerns, no matter where they live and who they are, Save the Children welcomes the initiative of the UN Study on Violence Against Children as an important opportunity for bringing about positive changes in the lives of girls and boys affected by violence.

Save the Children believes that the participation of children is crucial to the study's quality and credibility. Placing children's involvement at the heart of the study will help to better understand the extent and nature of violence against children. It will also help the process of designing more effective responses that provide children with improved protection against such violence as well as building on the growing involvement of children in challenging the violence committed against them.

Save the Children is therefore making considerable efforts to engage children in a meaningful and ethical way in the study. It is promoting the need for and the right of children to be involved as part of research teams investigating particular aspects of the problem; as equal participants in national and regional meetings and consultations connected to the study and as active partners in the dissemination and implementation of the study's findings.

Save the Children is also promoting creative ways of involving children and making sure that their voices are heard. This analysis of children's voices from South and Central Asia is part of Save the Children's initiative linked to the UN Study on Violence Against Children, which gathers children's voices and documents their concerns and priorities on violence against them. Countries and regions in which Save the Children is working are being asked to gather existing material from children on violence. That is, what children have already said about violence and how it affects them, what children have done to stop or prevent violence against them or other children and what children have recommended should be done to stop or prevent violence. This material

is being gathered from previous consultations and processes involving children over the past five years and is being presented in two forms—a publication and a film.

Rather than initiating a new set of consultations with children, this initiative is intended as a means by which Save the Children can begin to respond to the previously expressed agendas of children on violence against them. It is therefore an important part of a process of mobilising support internally within Save the Children and externally with other duty bearers for greater accountability for children's rights, that is, adults taking action to translate children's priorities and recommendations on violence against them into better policies and programmes.

We welcome this analysis of the voices of children in South and Central Asia on violence against them. It is our hope that this will be an important contribution to the national and regional processes linked to the UN Study on Violence Against Children taking place in 2005 in South and Central Asia; that the recommendations in this analysis will be seriously taken into account by all the relevant policy makers and that this contribution will also inspire other countries and regions to look back, reflect and act upon children's agendas.

**Clare Feinstein & Sarah Stevenson**

Save the Children

Child Participation Working Group

# Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all the girls and boys in South and Central Asia whose voices made this analysis possible. Special thanks to Neha Bhandari for her hard work and zeal in putting this document together. Thanks to Manoj Karki for his inputs and data collection.

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Finally, thanks to Clare Feinstein and Sarah Stevenson for their commitment to furthering children's voices in the world and Herluf G. Madsen for his insights and commitment in furthering participation of girls and boys in the region. We would also like to express our gratitude to Zubaida, Shireen, Shareef, Bhavani, Nimal, Lakshman, Ginova, Laxminarayan, Chandrika, Shyamol, Jacob, Monira and Ruslan for being true agents of child participation. We also thank Gyani Thapa for logistical support.

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# Abbreviations

<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CWC</b>	The Concerned for Working Children, India
<b>CWIN</b>	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
<b>GMC</b>	Global Movement for Children
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Government Organisation
<b>NPA</b>	National Plan of Action
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OSCAR</b>	Office for South and Central Asia Region
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation



# Executive Summary

Save the Children's commitment to contribute significantly to the UN Study on Violence Against Children has resulted in this analysis study of children's voices in South and Central Asia.

The study was carried out in three phases:

- In the first phase, all related literature was collected from Save the Children members' offices across the region.
- The second phase of the work included compilation of children's voices, concerns and priorities on violence against children.
- Children's voices were then analysed under different categories in the third and final phase of the work.

Accordingly, the analysis study has been divided into three different parts:

- regional perspective on violence against children
- analysis of different types of violence identified by children in the region
- recommendations by children to address/end violence against them.

Initially, the study was intended to look at the regional perspective as well as the country perspective. However, with very little related literature available from Sri Lanka, Bhutan and countries in Central Asia, the study had to be limited to a regional analysis.

This analysis of the voices of children in South and Central Asia on violence against children can be summarised in one single line: Children in the region have said that they have been subjected to violence, physical and psychological, in every aspect of their lives. Girls and boys have expressed, during consultations held at the national or regional level or while being primary sources to researchers, that they have been abused physically and psychologically in their homes, in the community, schools and institutions, at workplaces and on the streets. Moreover, the perpetrators of violence against them include their own parents, cousins and relatives, their teachers, elders and peers in the society and the security agents who are all regarded as their protectors.

The analysis study also shows that children are vulnerable to abuse due to the prevalence of single parenthood in Central Asia and early marriage in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Patriarchal structures and gender discrimination, which manifest in acid violence, especially against children in Bangladesh and honour killings in Pakistan, have also been reasons for children, especially girls, being subjected to violence. While in India and Pakistan, pedophiles, many of them truck drivers, have long since been abusing children, and mostly boys.

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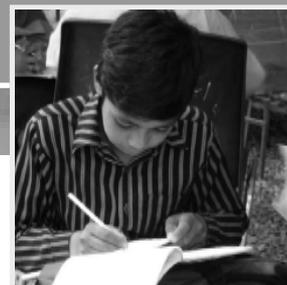
**VOICES and ACTIONS**

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in South and Central Asia

In their recommendations, boys and girls in South and Central Asia have called for a society where they are not subjected to any type of abuse while getting due benefits to live a fuller life. They also request one and all to protest wherever they see children being harmed or abused.

Finally, this document is a compilation of extracts from statements made by children in young people's forums and other regional and country consultations, directly against forms of violence like child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, HIV/AIDS, etc.

# 1 Introduction



When asked to identify issues important to them, children all over the world say violence is a priority concern. Rightly so, the UN Study on Violence Against Children concept paper (7 July 2003) draws attention on the need to emphasise children's own definitions of violence and to highlight strategies developed by children themselves to confront violence.

The study is an important opportunity to bring about real and positive changes in the lives of girls and boys. It is an opportunity to develop more effective responses that give children real protection from violence. Therefore, in the study, recognising the voices of children on violence against children is imperative. Additionally, listening to children's voices from a regional perspective is equally important since countries within South and Central Asia share, to some extent, similarities in the type and level of violence that children are subjected to and in the factors that are responsible for it.

It is also important to note that Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which all the countries in the region are party to, declares: "State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of expressing his/her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Furthermore, Article 19 of the CRC specifies: "State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."

Apart from making an effort to analyse the voices of children in South and Central Asia on violence against children, recommendations by girls and boys in the region concerning the various types of violence inflicted upon them have also been listed in this study.

## **Objectives**

This study is part of Save the Children's commitment to make a significant contribution to the UN Study on Violence Against Children. It aims to highlight the views and experiences of children on violence inflicted against them. It also aims to ensure that the regional perspective of South and Central Asia is incorporated within the study.

## **Methodology**

This analysis study, based on secondary information gathered in consultations with children and on participatory research undertaken by children, or where children were

primary sources for research, was carried out within a span of five weeks. All related documents available at the office of Save the Children Alliance in Kathmandu and documents sent by individuals from various Save the Children member countries were studied.

The concerned voices of children including quotes, views and expressions were then compiled, keeping in mind the regional perspective vis-à-vis the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

Concerns expressed by children on issues related to the situation of children in armed conflict were not included. This issue has been fully addressed by "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Report of Expert of the Secretary General, Mrs. Graca Machel".

### Limitations

The major limitation of the study was the unavailability of documents related to the study from some of the countries in the region. For various reasons, relevant literature, especially from Central Asia and Sri Lanka, was not readily available. Arduous efforts made to have them sent to Kathmandu were not successful due to time constraints and other technical difficulties. Some documents did not include analyses on any differences in priorities made by girls and boys from various backgrounds for instance, of age, gender, ability, social and economic background, etc. Some documents only covered issues prioritised by children but did not include analyses of actions recommended by children to address these rights violations.

However, reports on regional level consultations were a great help in incorporating the voices of children from all the countries.

## ***Violence against Children***

Violence against children is a social pattern encountered in every country around the world. It occurs in varied environments, taking many forms and with different degrees of severity.

Violence may range from killing, torture, commercial exploitation and child sexual abuse to a deliberate act of punishment or the impulsive reaction of an irritated parent or teacher. It takes place within families and homes, in schools, both private and state residential institutions and workplaces, in detention facilities and prisons, on the streets, as perpetrated by the police and in the use of capital and physical punishment. Violence can be physical, sexual, psychological and/or involving deprivation or neglect.

### **Violence against children can be defined as**

"Physical, psychological (psychosocial) and sexual violence to children in the form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, as acts of commission or omission of direct or indirect forms, that endanger or harm the child's dignity, physical, psychological or social status, or development<sup>1</sup>."

In every case, violence breaches fundamental human rights. Respect for human dignity and the right to physical integrity are universal principles. Yet, social and legal acceptance of different forms of violence against children, including hitting and other humiliating treatment of children by adults, persist in all countries of the world.

The most hidden and underreported form of violence against children may be sexual abuse. Boys and girls who have been sexually abused are also at a heightened risk of being drawn into the commercial sex trade as targets for trafficking and prostitution. Boys and girls who have been sexually abused feel intense shame. They have nobody to turn to or talk to. They might even blame themselves and/or be blamed by their parents for what happened. In many cultures, girls and boys are taught not to question adults or adult behaviour.

Neglect and emotional abuse are other common forms of violence that have been proven damaging to a child's self-acceptance and

<sup>1</sup> Proposed definition by the Advisory Panel for the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

self-esteem, with long-term and far reaching effects on their development and mental and physical health. Adult abusers, whatever their relationships with the children, are usually in positions of responsibility, trust and power, thereby, inflicting heightened damage.

Corporal and mental punishment of children often becomes inhuman or degrading and the invention of disreputable legal concepts such as "reasonable chastisement" and "lawful correction" arises from the perception that boys and girls are the property of adults.

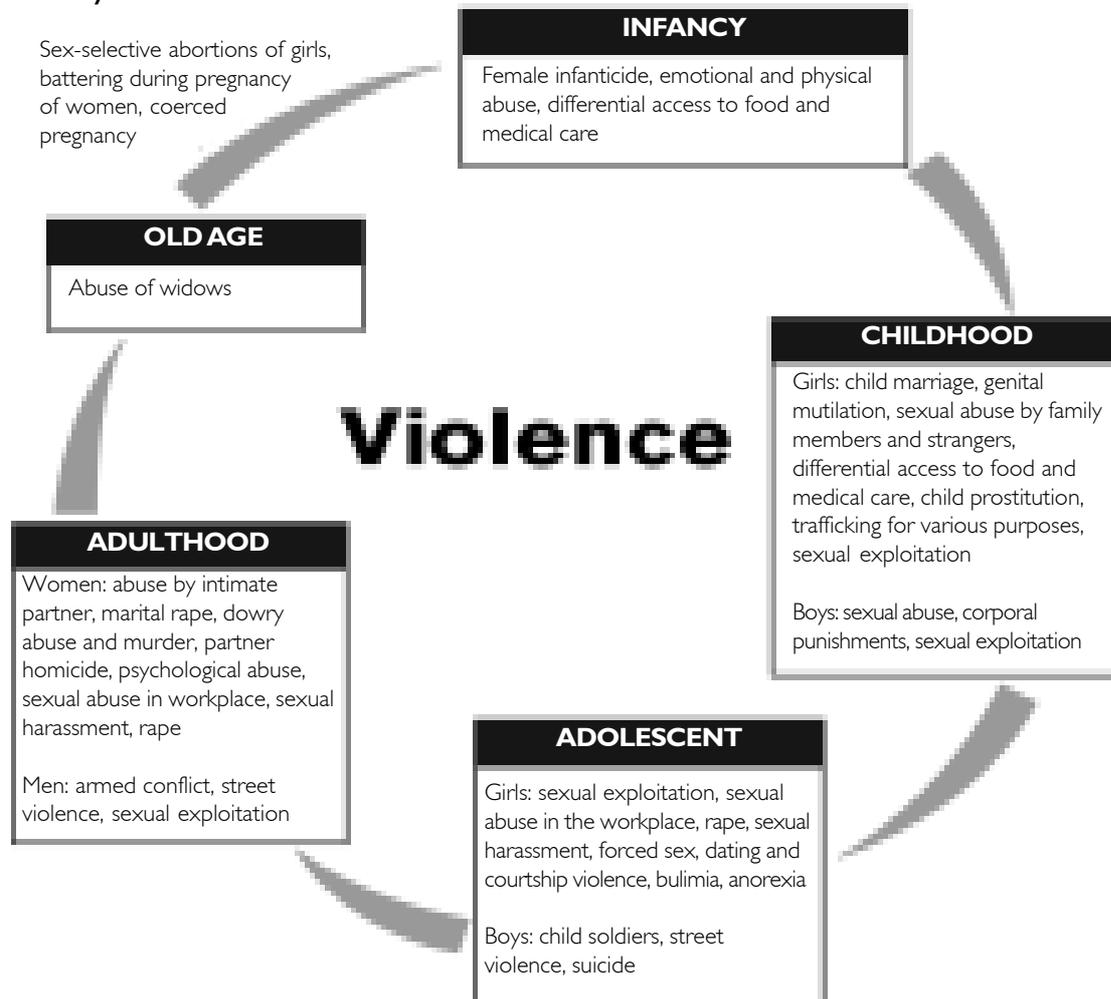
Gender-based violence is violence inflicted or suffered on the basis of gender differences, such as infanticide, honour killing, acid attacks and female genital mutilation. It is commonly used against women and girls. Nevertheless, particular groups of boys are also affected by violence

because of their gender, for example, boys who are murdered on the streets in Latin America. All forms of violence have a gender dimension since girls and boys are often affected in different ways and to different degrees due to persisting gender relations and power structures. Factors such as age, sexual preference, religion, ethnicity, ability, social and economic background also influence violence. Girls and boys who are marginalised and face discrimination are often vulnerable to various forms of violence.

### Reproduction of Violence

Violence is rooted in power relations (such as patriarchal structures), cultural values and beliefs. Violence is complex, takes various forms and has many causal factors. Violence against children is related to the overall violence in society.

### The Cycle of Violence<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Lena Karlsson and Ravi Karkara (Adapted from: Life Cycle Approach to Child Participation, a paper presented at global Save the Children meeting on Corporal Punishment in Cairo, Ravi Karkara, 2003)

**Factors that interact with each other to facilitate various forms of violence:**

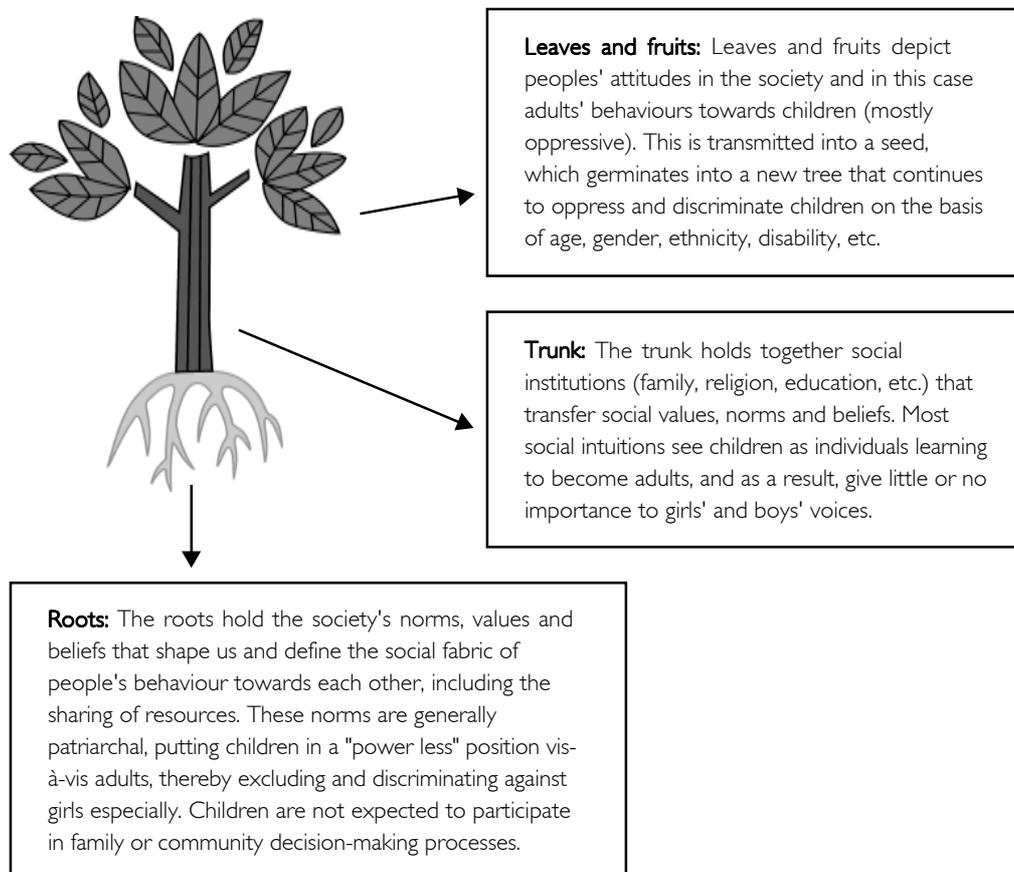
- structural (political, economic and social structures and the policy environment)
- institutional (organisations, institutions and social networks)
- interpersonal (relations between individuals for example within the household)
- individual (previous experiences, etc.)

These factors are often interlinked to facilitate and perpetuate various forms of violence.

Various forms of violence are also reproduced

from one generation to another. Girls and boys learn a culture while also contributing to its continuity and its transformation. They internalise the views and values of the societies they are part of and it shapes their attitudes, perceptions, behaviour and decisions later in life. (See socialisation tree, below.) These socialised ideas and practices are key parts of a culture. As adults, individuals use culture to explain or justify child-rearing and socialisation practices, even practices involving unequal treatment, such as gender discrimination and abuse. In this way, power relations, ideas and behaviours are reproduced from one generation to another.

**Tree of Socialisation and Gender<sup>3</sup>**



<sup>3</sup> Ravi Karkara and Lena Karlsson, Socialisation for Encouraging Children's Participation: Report on Child Rights Programming, Save the Children UK, 2003

It is possible to break the chain of reproducing violence. Promoting positive beliefs and norms that recognise girls and boys as rights holders will lead to the development of more child-friendly social institutions that are gender sensitive, inclusive and respectful of children's voices. It is also essential to encourage children's participation in decision-making processes. This, in turn, will result in a more democratic society that discourages all forms of oppression and discrimination.

### *Working against violence from a CRP perspective means*

- addressing the root cause of violence and addressing unequal power structures (patriarchal structures) and power relations between children and adults
- putting children at the centre, recognising them as rights holders and social actors
- giving priority to children and child-friendly environments and child-friendly information on violence, discrimination, gender relations and sexuality
- recognising governments as primary duty bearers accountable for addressing and taking action against violence
- seeing parents and family as the primary caregivers and protecting and supporting them in this role
- using participatory and empowering approaches while working in partnerships and alliances to promote the rights of children and address violence against girls and boys.

To work with a child rights approach also implies providing long-term goals, which are clearly set out in international legal frameworks, and encouraging legal and other reforms, such as the establishment of regular monitoring mechanisms that create a greater likelihood of sustainable change.

The most relevant duty bearers (responsible actors) must be identified and measures must be taken to advocate and support them in their role to prevent violence and protect children and address violence against children.

## CHILD RIGHTS PROGRAMMING AND VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND BOYS

### Relevant CRC Articles

Article 19 specifies that State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

Article 34-36 address sexual exploitation and abuse.

Article 34 and the Optional Protocol to the CRC commit State Parties to make and implement national laws against the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Article 35 obligates states to take all appropriate measures to prevent the abduction, sale and trafficking of children.

Article 39 commits states to promote the physical and psychological recovery and social integration of children who have been victims of any form of neglect, violence, exploitation, torture or other degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 24.3 requires States Parties to take all effective and appropriate measures with the intent to abolish traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

Article 28.2 requires States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the CRC.

Article 37.a of the convention, wants to guarantee that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.

Freedom of expression in Article 13 and the right to be heard in Article 12 are of particular importance when a child wants to speak up about violence and abuse. Children who have been abused and exploited have the right to be taken seriously, to be met with respect and to receive assistance. Good channels for reporting and effective disclosure procedures are essential measures for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse.

Violence violates the child's basic right to life and development as stated in Article 6 and the best interest of the child, set out in Article 3. It affects children from various backgrounds in different ways and is often linked to discrimination. It must be addressed through a non-discriminatory and inclusive approach and therefore Article 2 is also relevant. State Parties are the main duty bearers and they must undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for implementation of the rights. Article 4 is therefore a key article for protecting, preventing and addressing violence against children.

IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN	ROOT CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ lack of appropriate sex education for children</li> <li>■ availability of sex-sites on the Internet</li> <li>■ denial by/ignorance of adults on violence</li> <li>■ parenting: low participation of children in families (parents do not listen to their children)</li> <li>■ adult attitudes towards children, social taboos, for instance blaming the child</li> <li>■ inappropriate laws and ineffective implementation</li> <li>■ sexualisation of children in the media</li> <li>■ poverty, globalisation, micro-macro economics</li> <li>■ unfriendly juvenile justice system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ patriarchy and dominant forms of masculinities, roles of men (boys' sexual behaviour)</li> <li>■ unequal power relations (gender, age, class, disability, caste, religion, etc.)</li> <li>■ unequal sexual relations between men and women, boys and girls</li> <li>■ overall violence in society, including violence against children</li> <li>■ stereotyped gender socialisation</li> <li>■ lack of children's participation in society at large</li> <li>■ poverty</li> </ul>

Some of the important duty bearers (responsible actors) that should be addressed to prevent and combat violence against children include State Parties, parents, community leaders, religious leaders, NGOs, teachers and education authorities, local government, law enforcement bodies, the private sector, media, UN bodies, police, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, training institutes, policy makers, politicians and the international community.

In order to prevent and combat violence against children it is important to address it from a multi-sector approach and to conduct both preventive and curative work. It is important to establish child-friendly community-based psychosocial support structures and mechanisms to shape societies that respect and listen to children. We need to listen to children and take their voices into serious consideration when developing programmes and policies against violence and in implementing and monitoring activities.

Since all violence against children has a gender dimension and gender-based violence is a large part of all violence in society, we need to address it from a gender perspective. Violence is perpetuated through patriarchal values and

the main perpetrators of many forms of violence are men and boys. Therefore, we must promote life skills, responsible sexual behaviour, gender equality, conflict resolutions, non-violent behaviour, anger management, respect for rights, respect for diversity, etc. This can be done through school curricula, children's organisations/gatherings and through the media. Teachers need to be equipped with skills in positive discipline.

We must work with boys and men as partners to address violent forms of masculinity and to take initiatives for more equal gender relations. It is important to promote programmes for young men on parenting and to stress the benefits of men playing a more active role in nurturing their children and in abandoning the culture of violence and abuse.

Since a lot of violence takes place within families, it is important to work with family members (fathers and mothers) to support them in their role as parents. Parents should also be encouraged to allow girls and boys to express their views and to participate in decisions that affect them. Parents should also be encouraged to promote values of equality and untraditional gender roles and relations.

# Prevalence of Violence against Children in South and Central Asia



Violence is a global crisis, taking the lives of an estimated 1.6 million people every year. A significant percent of this figure is reported from South and Central Asia. Though violence affects all sections of society, children suffer the most since child abuse and exploitation are either unreported or underreported in the region. It is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and socio-cultural environments and takes many forms.

The developmental stage of children and their dependence on adults makes them exceedingly vulnerable. Children are often subject to various forms of violence within the family, at school, in institutions and on the streets. There are many types of violence, varying in degrees of intensity, generally prevalent in countries across South and Central Asia. Children are frequently mistreated and abused; they endure severe physical and psychological punishment, torture, forced labour, denial of food, isolation, restraints, sexual assaults and are sometimes even murdered, often at the hands of the very individuals responsible for their care and safety.

Children are also subject to state sanctioned or state tolerated violence. Children in detention facilities and other state or private institutions are often victims of beating, sexual abuse, rape,

neglect and psychological violence by staff and caregivers. Street children and other children in contact with law enforcement personnel are at risk of violent treatment.

Children with disabilities are even more vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual violence because prevailing attitudes of their own families and of society at large include shame, embarrassment and concealment on the part of the former and neglect, fear, avoidance and ridicule on the part of the latter. The perpetrators of violence against disabled children take full advantage of the negative attitudes towards them, knowing they can get away with impunity. Disabled girls are often doubly disadvantaged in society since they are girls and disabled.

However, there is a lack of systematic data and reliable information in the region on the level and impact of violence on children. This has, to some extent, hindered the general acceptance of violence against children as a problem in society.

- In Nepal, a survey conducted in 1996 on domestic violence found that 13% of the respondents knew about at least one case of child sexual abuse<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> SAATHI, A situational analysis of violence against women and girls in Nepal, 1997

- In Afghanistan, 82% of the children interviewed reported slapping, kicking and caning as common forms of physical punishment. They reported feeling physical pain, sadness, sickness, anger, unhappiness and depression<sup>5</sup>. Over 50% of the children reported they were beaten when they were noisy or naughty. Approximately 24% said that they were beaten when they did not learn their school lessons. About 9% said that they were beaten when they disobeyed adults.
- In Bangladesh, according to the 2002 *Democracy Watch Report*, there were 362 cases of children being raped, and of them, 23 were killed after rape. Of the 11 women who were killed in acid attacks one was a girl child. In all, 54 children were disfigured by acid. The disfiguring of young girls, especially by throwing acid, is a growing and open form of violence in the country. In 1998, there were more than 200 reported cases of acid attacks, but UNICEF believes that the number of actual cases is much higher. According to the report eight children also died due to dowry related violence. In the five months between August and December, 40 children committed suicide across the country<sup>6</sup>. In a sample survey of child sexual abuse in Bangladesh in 1997, half of the 150 persons interviewed admitted experiencing some form of sexual abuse during childhood. The study findings also show that children as young as five years old have been abused<sup>7</sup>.
- In India, according to National Crime Records Bureau reports, rape of girls below 10 years of age has increased by 16.6% from 1996 to 1997. At least 600,000 to 700,000 Indian children are likely to have experienced sexual abuse, mostly by members of their own families. Fifteen per cent of Indian sex workers are children. Of the total cases of child sexual abuse, 40% are incestuous, with the abuser being uncles or male cousins. India has the largest number of working children in the world with credible estimates ranging from 60 to 115 million<sup>8</sup>. Sweating in the heat of stone quarries, working in the fields 12 hours a day, picking rags in city streets or hidden away as domestic servants, these children endure miserable and difficult lives. Children in conflict with the law are also subjected to severe corporal/physical punishment, torture, isolation, restraints, sexual assaults, harassment and humiliation in detention facilities or police lock-ups.
- In Pakistan, the magnitude of the problem can be gauged from the fact that in 2002 alone, the reported cases of physical and sexual violence against children totalled 1,615. Of these, 568 were murders, 340 were rapes, 287 were sodomy cases and 253 were cases of serious injury and torture<sup>9</sup>. Most of the cases of violations go unreported and hence the real magnitude of the problem cannot be accurately measured. Madadgar, Pakistan's first helpline for children and women reported that male children were more vulnerable than female children. Of the total number of abuses in 2002, 922 were committed against minor boys while the remaining 693 were against girls. The numbers could be deceptive since there is a high possibility that the lower figure for girls is the result of underreporting rather than of a lower rate of incidences.

<sup>5</sup> Save the Children Sweden, Afghanistan, Mini Survey Report on Corporal Punishment in Afghanistan, 2003

<sup>6</sup> Democracy Watch has been regularly monitoring the law and order situation, especially human rights violations in the country, since April 2001. The research is based on news and reports on the law and order situation published in the six leading national dailies— Daily Ittefaq, Daily Inquilab, Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Juganto, and Janakantha. [http://www.dwatch-bd.org/mediawatch/violence\\_print.html](http://www.dwatch-bd.org/mediawatch/violence_print.html)

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, Hayward, Ruth Finney: Breaking the earthenware jar: lessons from South Asia to end violence against women and girls, 2000

<sup>8</sup> Human Rights Watch, Children's Rights Project, Bonded Child Labour In India, 1996 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/India3.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, 2002

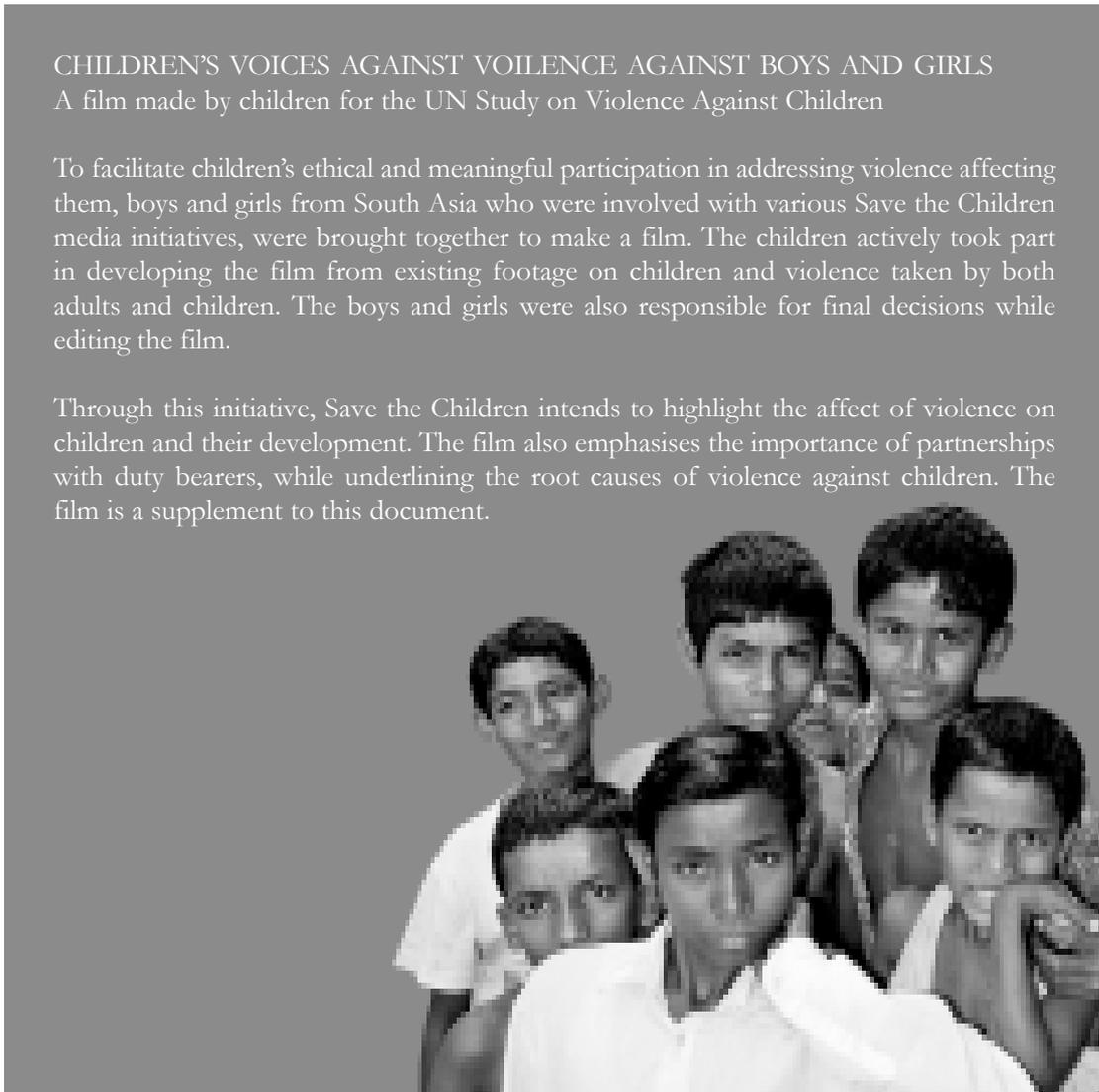
- In Sri Lanka, in homes, communities, schools and workplaces and in areas of armed conflict, the reported incidences of physical, psychological and sexual abuse of children has been steadily increasing. UNICEF figures indicate that by 1991 child sex work (especially of boys) had assumed serious proportions in Sri Lanka, with estimates of up to 30,000 children between the ages of 7 and 18 involved in the sex trade.  
(For more information, refer to Violence against Children in South Asia, Fahmida Jabeen, 2005)

#### CHILDREN'S VOICES AGAINST VOILENCE AGAINST BOYS AND GIRLS

A film made by children for the UN Study on Violence Against Children

To facilitate children's ethical and meaningful participation in addressing violence affecting them, boys and girls from South Asia who were involved with various Save the Children media initiatives, were brought together to make a film. The children actively took part in developing the film from existing footage on children and violence taken by both adults and children. The boys and girls were also responsible for final decisions while editing the film.

Through this initiative, Save the Children intends to highlight the affect of violence on children and their development. The film also emphasises the importance of partnerships with duty bearers, while underlining the root causes of violence against children. The film is a supplement to this document.





# 3 Analysis of Different types of Violence against Children in the Region



Following the UN General Assembly's request to the Secretary General to conduct an in-depth study on violence against children in 2001, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that violence should include all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, including sexual abuse, bullying in schools and physical and degrading/humiliating punishments.

Likewise, the working definition of violence according to the concept paper for the UN Study on Violence Against Children is: "physical, psychological (psychosocial) and sexual violence to children through abuse, neglect or exploitation, as acts of commission or omission in direct or indirect forms, that endanger or harm the child's dignity, physical, psychological or social status, or development".

Based on the voices of children against violence inflicted on them, and compiled during the course of this analysis study, violence can be divided into different categories, namely:

1. Physical and Degrading/Humiliating Punishments
2. Child Sexual Abuse
3. Commercial and Sexual Exploitation (Including Trafficking) of Boys and Girls
4. Gender-based Violence
5. Children in Conflict with the Law

In this study, children's voices in all these thematic areas have been linked to various settings such as violence in the home and family, violence in schools, violence against children in conflict with the law, violence against children in all forms of alternative care, violence in work situations, violence in the community and on the streets and violence in unstable settings.

## ***3.1 Physical and Degrading/ Humiliating Punishments***

Voices of children in South and Central Asia identify physical and degrading/humiliating punishments, both at home and at school, as the most prevalent forms of violence against children that impedes their development and overall well-being. Children in the region are physically and mentally punished for not going to school, committing a mistake or not agreeing to adults' views, for challenging norms of tradition and culture or even without a reason. Research also shows that such punishments are responsible for many children running away from home, making them more vulnerable to various kinds of violence in the streets.

In most cases physical and degrading/humiliating punishment is used by adults to show their superiority and power over young children. A proverb in Sri Lanka justifying

physical punishment says: "A child brought up without beating is similar to a curry prepared without stirring". It is an indication of how common this practice is.

Schools, where children spend a majority of their developmental period, have been identified by the children of South and Central Asia as a place where they are subjected to various forms of physical and degrading/humiliating punishments. Afraid of punishment and unable to focus on learning, children have said that physical and degrading/humiliating punishments affected their performance in school.

While children say teachers are responsible for inflicting violence on them, classmates too are responsible for inflicting violence against their peers. Students are ridiculed by their peers for being poor, for not being the teacher's favourites or for being disabled. There is widespread discrimination in schools, especially against students from poor communities and girls. Instances of physical and degrading/humiliating punishments have been reported to be particularly severe in *madrasas* (religious schools).

In South and Central Asia, most schools support physical and degrading/humiliating punishments as the best ways to discipline children, build character and facilitate learning. The types of physical punishment used in the classroom range

from slapping, caning and pulling ears to punching and kicking. Teachers make children stand on one foot with arms outstretched, or on a bench facing the class. Another favourite punishment is to make children do sit-ups continuously until they are exhausted. Other forms of discipline that children have to endure are standing under the sun in summer and running around the school compound.

However, there is no significant difference in physical and verbal abuse and humiliation used against girls and boys, but certain types of physical punishment such as punching and kicking are reported mainly from boys' schools. Unfortunately, many parents support the school's right to resort to physical and degrading/humiliating punishment as they feel that it is the correct and only form of truly disciplining a child.

In consultations, children from tribal and other interior areas have identified the language barrier that they face as a principal reason for being beaten in schools. In most tribal localities, children only speak their native language, whereas in schools, which are mostly state run, teachers speak and teach in the official state language. This creates a gap between the teaching and learning processes and as a result, children are beaten for not understanding what they are taught.

***"I have seen the harsh behaviour of teachers in schools and colleges. Everyday there are severe punishments by teachers, so we remain very afraid in class. The teacher often makes a student stand up in class, scolds him with ugly words and teases him for being naughty or for not learning the lessons. It is very shameful as well as painful. I thought it would end in school, but it prevails in college. These are problems of students."***

- A 17-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"The teacher at the school humiliated me. This made me reluctant to go to school. I bunked one or two classes. Once a few of us could not answer a question. The girls were given punishment of sit-ups while a girl was made to slap me in front of everybody. I was ashamed and vowed not to go to school again."***

- A school dropout boy in India (Save the Children/UNICEF, Plan India, World Vision, IGSSS, CRS, GMC, 2001)

***"I am afraid if I fail in exams my father will beat me."***

- A child in Kandahar, Afghanistan (Save the Children, 2003)

Despite violence being accepted as a disciplinary norm in many parts of the region, girls and boys in South and Central Asia have, during consultations and research, raised their voices against the perpetrators of violence in their own homes and communities. They identified their fathers- (alcoholic in many instances), mothers, elders and close relatives as the perpetrators, resorting to violence ranging

from physical punishment and verbal abuse to sexual abuse at times.

Boys and girls in South and Central Asia have also found themselves more vulnerable to violence especially when they are compelled to live with a stepmother or stepfather. Family members like uncles also physically and mentally abuse children.

***"My teacher teaches in Oriya, which I don't understand. When he asks me a question, I can't answer because I don't follow what he says. He abuses me and hits me with a duster everyday for it."***

- A 9-year-old tribal girl from Orissa, India (Save the Children UK, India, 2001)

***"I am afraid of the cruel teachers. I am afraid of my teacher's anger."***

- A child aged 8-10 years in Kandahar, Afghanistan (Save the Children, 2003)

***"Sometimes the teachers only give attention to the rich people, not the poor people."***

- A girl in Wardaj, Afghanistan (Save the Children, 2003)

***"The teacher asks us to pull off branches from the bush outside. Then they give us a beating with them... They force us to beat other children too. If we beat them softly, we are beaten and told, 'Beat like this'. Boys are forced to beat girls and girls to beat boys."***

- A boy from Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh (Save the Children UK, India, GMC, 2001)

***"I get scared when my father drinks and comes home. He beats me and my mother."***

- A child living in a pavement in India (CWC, India, 1998)

***"I am never allowed to go out. If I do, both my mother and brother hit me. When I do go out, people in the community look at me as if they have never seen me. They talk behind my back and call me names."***

- A girl living and working on the streets of Mumbai, India (CWC, India, 1998)

***"I cannot play because my mother works and I have to look after her children otherwise she hits me with a stick."***

- A 13-year-old girl in Logar, Afghanistan (Save the Children, Afghanistan, 2001)

***"I was only 12 years old when I ran away from home. My family was very poor. My father did not have a job but he used to drink every night, sometimes even in the day. Then he used to beat me, my mother and sisters."***

- A street boy in India  
(Save the Children/UNICEF, Plan India, World Vision, IGSSS, CRS, GMC, 2001)

***"Our stepmother tortured us a lot. My elder brother couldn't tolerate her torture and so he ran away. My father beat us frequently because of my stepmother. Because of this, my sister left the house and took up a job in a garment factory. I also left the house and got a job at a shop."***

- A boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"I live on the streets. My mother is dead. My father, an alcoholic, beats me every time he is drunk. So I feel safer here. I sometimes go with men for 'bad things'."*

- A 14-year-old street boy in Bishkek, Central Asia (Save the Children, 2002)

*"My mother died when I was very young. My stepmother harassed me so my father sold me to my aunt for Rs. 2,000. I did all the household work there and ate leftover food... When I was suffering from small pox, nobody provided care for me. Once I put my aunt's daughter on my lap and she beat me up. She tried to cut off my fingers. I tried to resist, yet I lost one finger. I ran away and ended up in the railway station."*

- A street child in India

*"I have lived in a cellar for four years. My mother died and my father had a new girl friend and they threw me out. If I went home they beat me."*

- A 16-year-old street boy in Tashkent, Central Asia (Save the Children, 2002)

*"(I left home) only because of my stepfather...He always comes late in the evening and beats us, tortures us..."*

- A 14-year-old girl in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Central Asia (Save the Children UK, 2004)

*"My parents used to think that I am their property. They used to abuse me using words my mouth cannot repeat without making me cry."*

- A 13-year-old girl from Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"Children are always under mental pressure. When I wake up in the morning, I try to guess how many scoldings I will get during the day for no reason. I am becoming afraid of myself."*

- A child in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"Parents always scold the child in front of others. This adversely affects the self-esteem of the child. As a result, the child gets angry and develops a very bad temper."*

- A boy student in Grade 8 in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"Verbal abuse against children is worse than the physical one because it affects the mind."*

- A 15-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"It is not possible for children to ask the same question twice because they will be beaten. Many children get yelled at if they ask questions. No child is allowed, by an adult, to inquire twice because he will be rebuked or slapped."*

- A 13-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"Physical punishment is not violence but a way of educating children and making them become adults. Physical punishment is necessary for children."*

- A 14-year-old Boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"As a result of punishment for not doing homework the teacher used to let them go if they agreed to kiss him on the cheek or he made them kiss a friend of the opposite sex. He made them sit on his lap if they asked him to return their notebooks."*

- Girls in private school, aged 8-10 years in Kathmandu, Nepal  
(Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

Apart from physical punishments, children commonly endure verbal abuse like the use of filthy words, name calling and scolding by adults, including family members at home, neighbours in the community, employers at workplaces and teachers in schools. Children said that this hampered their self-esteem beyond repair, making them ashamed of themselves.

Research also showed that boys and girls in South and Central Asia consider physical and degrading/humiliating punishment an acceptable form of discipline. As a result, children have been accepting this behaviour.

Consultations with children show that physical and degrading/humiliating punishment is endorsed as a necessary element of disciplined upbringing in South and Central Asian countries. For many it is a deeply personal issue, especially since most people were hit as children by their parents. They do not like to think badly of their parents or their parenting. This makes it difficult for many people to accept the human rights imperative for challenging and ending all physical and degrading/humiliating punishment. Both homes and schools

look on physical punishment as a normal and natural process, a view that some children have internalised to the extent that they believe it is a justified consequence of their own transgressions.

In regional consultations, voices of children from minority classes have also been heard talking about severe psychological abuse from people of the so-called higher castes, including their peers on the basis of caste and religion.

Differently abled children in the region have also experienced physical and degrading/humiliating punishments not only from people in the community but from their peers as well. In schools, too, children with disabilities are subjected to verbal abuse and discrimination from their own classmates and even their teachers treat them differently.

Children in South and Central Asia have identified the discrimination that they face in schools because of their disabilities. It is clear from what children say, that teachers have prompted these feelings among the students who then feel it is right to ridicule their peers.

***"Being beaten without reason by the teachers makes me unhappy."***

- A boy aged 15-18 years in Herat, Afghanistan (Save the Children, 2003)

***"They say, 'your religion is wrong and full of stupid things and is false. Our religion is the only right religion'."***

- A 16-year-old in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"During games, they rebuke, beat or become nasty with us and our people. So we do not play with them any more."***

- A 13-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"Because of my disability with my right hand, it takes me one hour to write what the other children can write in 20 minutes. My teacher never considers this disadvantage and she gives me the same time as my classmates for completing the exams."***

- A 14-year-old student in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"People look down on me. Most treat me like the dirt, just simply walking over me on the street."***

- A 12-year-old boy with suspected deformity from birth in Tashkent, Central Asia

***"When I come out of my house the people point at me and say, 'Why don't you stay in? Look at you, you cannot walk properly'."***

- A 12-year-old boy with physical disabilities in Lahore, Pakistan  
(Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

**"I am disabled and I hate children who tell me so."**

- A child aged 8-10 years in Heart, Afghanistan (Save the Children, Afghanistan, 2003)

**"My supporting teacher did not come when she was pregnant because people had told her that if she stayed next to me, her child would become disabled like me."**

- A 15-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

**"In my village, if children with disability come to school, the teacher asks them, 'Why do you come to school?' and makes them sit in a corner."**

- A child from India (CWC, India, 1998)

**"Teachers refused to enroll me and the parents of my classmates did not want me to go to school because of my disability. They think their children will become like me if they play or study with me."**

- A 13-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

## CHILDREN'S ACTIONS

Interface of Children with MLAs (Members of Legislative Assembly) on Physical and Degrading/Humiliating Punishments in Schools, Institutions and Homes, Orissa, India



Save the Children in collaboration with Government of Orissa and leading child rights NGOs namely, South Orissa Voluntary Action (SOVA), Open Learning Systems, Aaina, AKSSUS and Members of Legislative Assembly of the Government of Orissa facilitated a meeting of MLAs to discuss the consequences of physical and degrading/humiliating punishment on children. It was the first time in India that such an interface between children and people's representative took place on this issue. Thirty-five MLAs from ruling and opposition parties and 22 children (10 boys and 12 girls), representing urban and tribal areas attended the meeting.

The forum was a culmination of numerous consultations and dialogues between children, village education committees and district officials. At all these discussions, children demanded a platform to share their opinions and views on the current education system. This interface aimed to fill that void. The purpose of the meeting was also to discuss recommendations and actions for banning physical and degrading/humiliating punishments and to introduce positive discipline in schools and institutions.

The immediate result of the interface was the banning of corporal punishment in the state of Orissa in August 2004.

*(Neha Bhandari, Working against Physical and Degrading/Humiliating Punishments of Girls and Boys, Experiences from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, Save the Children, 2005)*

### **Film by Children on Physical and Degrading/Humiliating Punishments, Andhra Pradesh, India**

In 2003, 25 children were chosen from five Save the Children consultations to be trained in video filmmaking. Children were divided into groups to work on different films simultaneously. Each group was then trained in different aspects of filmmaking such as script writing, camera handling, on location production and editing. Children chose the themes for their films: child labour (2 films), education for all, school dropouts, HIV/AIDS, physical and degrading/humiliating punishments.

In the film on physical and degrading/humiliating punishments, children used role-play to illustrate the gravity of the problem. To get different perspectives on the issue, they interviewed teachers, head masters, counselors, parents, children and NGO workers. The film is now being used as a tool in forums and meetings to initiate debates on the topic.

*(Neba Bhandari, Working against Physical and Degrading/Humiliating Punishments of Girls and Boys, Experiences from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, Save the Children, 2005)*

### **Afghanistan's Children: Children's Consultation Kit**

In Afghanistan, The Children's Voices initiative was initially planned in 2000-2001 so the voices of Afghan children could be heard at the United Nations special session. Earlier, during Taliban rule, it was very unlikely that child representatives would have been able to participate directly in the UN special session. A strategy involving collaborative efforts by Save the Children, NGOs and INGOs was undertaken to develop the Children's Consultation Kit. Applying creative methodologies, girls and boys are encouraged to share views about their lives and their rights through drawings, poems, as well as through words. Workshops to train partners to use the consultation kit were organised. Afghan children in various situations in and out of Afghanistan were then consulted. Key messages, drawings and ideas from Afghan children about their rights to survival, protection, participation and development were then brought together in an attractively designed book called Afghanistan's Children.

*"I have been a teacher for 31 years. In all those years I have controlled the children by force and I would beat them. I was a dictator! But using the consultation kit changed me. I realised I could befriend the children. I used to be feared and hated. Now I am loved and trusted. Now the children know their rights and so do I." (Teacher, Kabul, Afghanistan)*

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### **Child Brigade Members as Resource Persons, Bangladesh**

Child Brigade, a children's organisation run for and by working street children, has sought to liaise with other agencies to meet their own needs and those of the children they work with. Their organisation has gained recognition and a good reputation for its work in child rights, and other organisations have invited Child Brigade members as resource

## VOICES and ACTIONS

of Girls and Boys to end Violence against Children  
in South and Central Asia

persons. For example, members of Child Brigade have assisted WHO staff in surveying the health needs of slum children. They have supported other NGOs working on children's participation and the formation of children's organisations, and assisted Save the Children in developing a child rights calendar. They presented a drama at a regional workshop on corporal punishment and made a presentation on children's participation to a multi-agency gathering at the launching of 'State of the World's Children' by UNICEF. The members have also participated in many child led initiatives and children's collaborative programmes, including work on children and justice and processes relating to the Special Session and Global Movement for Children.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### Global Movement for Children (GMC), Mazar, Afghanistan

GMC is part of a regional network within Afghanistan, where children meet once a month and share their ideas and concerns. Children directly participate in these discussions, which culminate in an event where children put forth their ideas to adults in positions of authority. GMC includes 42 children's groups in different locations and 8 working children's groups. The organisation focuses on discrimination between girls and boys, child labour and corporal punishment. The latter is an important issue since many older people in Afghanistan do not think twice before striking a child. Punishment can be given without causing bodily harm or mental distress. GMC teaches elders that corporal punishment is a violation of child rights.

In different formal schools children's groups have trained 100 teachers on child rights and the problems associated with corporal punishment.

*(From Strength to Strength, Children's Initiatives and Organisation, South & Central Asia, Save the Children, 2004)*



### 3.2 Child Sexual Abuse

Girls and boys in South and Central Asia have reported sexual abuse and exploitation in almost every sphere of their lives. Children from all sections of society—on the streets, or in schools, within their own families or children in conflict with the law—have been victims of sexual violence from being subjected to abusive language and eve teasing to touching, fondling and rape.

The perpetrators, according to children, include elders of the society, law enforcement agents, employers, schoolteachers and principals, musclemen and more importantly, members of their own families.

There have been cases of sexual abuse in orphanages, boarding schools, shelter homes, safe custody, correctional centres, vagrant homes, religious institutions, schools, police stations and prisons. Both girls and boys are subject to sexual abuse in workplaces and the perpetrators are usually employers or co-workers. Sexual abuse also occurs in homes, at

bus stations, video shops, hotels, cinemas and parks. Even though many of these are public places, there is a tendency to deny and conceal this form of violence.

Most research indicates that girls and boys experience severe mental trauma and stigma after they have been sexually abused and/or exploited. Evidence from consultations with boys and girls suggest that they feel sullied or destroyed.

Children are vulnerable to sexual abuse because of their age, their naiveté and their dependence on adults. Sexual abuse that occurs for a longer period affects a child more than short term abuse. Violent forms of sexual abuse are more harmful to a child than fondling, kissing or touching. The more closely related the abused child is to the abuser, the greater the damage to the victim's psychological condition.

However, survivors of sexual abuse feel shame and face stigma, and most abused children do

***"Adults ask us to follow them and do 'bad things' with them. If we don't, they make us bleed."***  
- A 14-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"Some teachers give filthy looks and unwanted behaviour (sexual harassment). Possibility of being expelled from school if we don't listen to them."***  
- A girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"The police said, 'We know you are a child prostitute and you have a lot of money. Give us some!' When I said I did not have money, they tried to rape me. The police did not believe a word I said and they beat me and sexually abused me."***  
- A 16-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"Girl domestic worker is asked to prepare the bed for the male employer, forced to enter the room and raped."***  
- Working children in New Delhi, India (Butterflies, 2001)

***"I had slept at my cousin's place in the same room and at night she forced me to have sex."***  
- A 14-year-old boy in Nepal (Save the Children Norway /CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

***"They raped me for six or seven hours. I did not report it to police because I was afraid that the police would take me to prison where they could do bad things to me."***  
- A 15-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

**"My 19-year-old cousin used to put me on his lap, show me how to do homework. He began to keep his fly open where I can see his private part. Then one day, he put me on his bed, took off his underwear and mine. Then he slept over me. It was very painful."**

- A 10-year-old school girl in Kathmandu, Nepal (Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

**"We are followed by the boys and they make rude remarks against us. We feel embarrassed and want to stay in our houses."**

- A 10-year-old girl in Lahore, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

**"A man gave me some money to play more games. After I finished, he invited me to a cup of tea. He took me inside a small room within the shop. He locked the door and assaulted me by force."**

- A 14-year-old boy in Peshawar, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

**"When I was raped by my brother-in-law, I told my husband about it but he threw me out of the house and ended our marriage. He told me I was bad and that I had dishonoured him, the family and the community. He forced me into the streets. That was the beginning of my life as a sex worker."**

- A 14-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

**"He touched me, took off my pants, and then he put his mouth on it. After a while my body began to tremble and I got scared. I told my brother about it, he told my father and father scolded me."**

- A 9-year-old boy in Kathmandu, Nepal (Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

not talk about it to protect themselves, as well as the perpetrators who are often family members. Afraid of being blamed or cast out from the family, children do not speak out. Sometimes they are threatened or bribed by the abuser or are anxious about the response of adults. Often, the lack of the words to relate what happened, makes them afraid of being disbelieved. Perpetrators sometimes try to cover up the situation by falsely accusing the children they abuse.

A sexually abused girl often has no marriage prospects. Frequently, when girls report sexual abuse, the family tries to conceal it, worried that she and other girls in the family will not be considered eligible for marriage. Many families do not file complaints of rape and sexual abuse because of the trauma that the abused child goes through while reporting the crime, undergoing medical examination and giving evidence during

the trial. The lengthy legal process, which seldom shows results, acts as another deterrent for families to report these incidents.

Children also said that the discriminatory attitude of society and their families has led to increased rates of sexual abuse, including girls being raped by relatives and by their male peers.

Consultations with children have also brought to light the fact that in certain countries in the region, boys do not have the same legal protection on sexual abuse that girls do.

Some powerful leaders and commanders are known to sexually abuse boys. Older boys and men in the streets, in homes, jails, schools and religious institutions also lure boys for sex. Afraid of provoking their guardians, teachers, maulvis (religious preachers) and other caregivers, these boys remain silent.

## CHILDREN'S ACTIONS



### Consultations with Girls and Boys in Bangladesh on Sexual Exploitation

In June and July of 2001, a series of consultations were held in Bangladesh with eight groups of boys and girls aged 10 to 17 who had either had direct experience of sexual exploitation (including trafficking) or were considered at risk of sexual abuse. These consultations were designed to hear first hand about the problems faced by

children who are sexually abused and exploited and their ideas about what should be done to help them and to combat this kind of exploitation. This exercise was part of a participatory process devised to develop a National Plan of Action (NPA) against sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including trafficking.

The sessions with children generated a pool of information and ideas, which were subsequently shared with stakeholders at sub-national meetings in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna, and at a national meeting in Dhaka. The children's inputs ultimately had an influence on the content of the NPA, which was finalised in November 2001. It identified issues, objectives, strategies and partners under the following themes: prevention, protection, recovery/reintegration, perpetrators, child participation, HIV/AIDS, STIs and substance abuse and coordination and monitoring.

The NPA was followed by a Regional Consultation in Dhaka in November and the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (in December 2001). A delegation of government and NGO representatives and two girls who took part in the children's consultations attended the Second World Congress. In February 2002, the NPA received Cabinet approval.

In early 2002, steps were taken to start implementing the NPA. A national committee responsible for implementation of and monitoring the NPA was formed with four working sub-groups on prevention, protection, recovery/reintegration and participation. Each sub-group prepared a work plan for 2002 that takes up action-selected strategies from the relevant section of the NPA. The sub-group on participation planned a further round of consultations in order to report back to children involved in the first round on developments since that time and to seek their ideas about the potential role of children in implementing the NPA. Their views will be shared with the NPA Implementation and Monitoring Committee and the other sub-groups. The sub-group on participation is also developing a simplified version of the NPA that will be used for broad-based dissemination, including among children.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

## Children take Collective Action against Sexual Harassment, Andhra Pradesh, India

"In our village the teacher molested a girl. We organised a rally and took a petition to the police station. They arrested that person."

- A boy, sangha member

In July 2000, in a village high school in Andhra Pradesh in India, a physical education instructor molested a 13-year-old dalit (lower caste) girl. The girl complained to her mother, who charged the school. Playing on the children's loyalty to their teacher, school authorities prompted children to stage dharna (protest) against the teacher's release. However, most of these children, including the girl affected, were members of the Children's Sangha supported by the Young India Project (YIP). When a YIP organiser came to the village, the sangha members discussed the incident and formed a fact-finding committee. After the children gathered more information about the incident, they decided to take action against the teacher. Child representatives met with the district police authorities to call for the teacher's arrest. Although the superintendent of police was a woman known for her sensitivity and courage, under political pressures she tried to dissuade the children from proceeding further. Even some of women teachers tried to prevent further action, arguing that harassment of women by men is so common, there is no need to make mountains out of ant hills.

YIP, however, continued supporting the children to pursue the case. Meanwhile, some left wing political parties jumped into the fray. They were interested in getting an out-of-court settlement. Back at the village, the girl's brother and sister stopped attending school. Sangha girls started visiting the girl's house to persuade her mother to let the children attend school. Initially, the mother chased the girls away, but finally the sangha members convinced the parents and the children returned to school. The adult union also took up the issue on behalf of the children. Finally, after two months, the teacher was suspended and removed from the school. The girl still left the village but is continuing her education.

Note of Reflection: This is an interesting case. When the initial allegation was made, the children, lacking adequate information, supported the teacher. However, encouraged to find out more, the children set up a fact finding team. As a result of what they discovered, the children organised a rally against the schoolteacher and called for action to be taken against him.

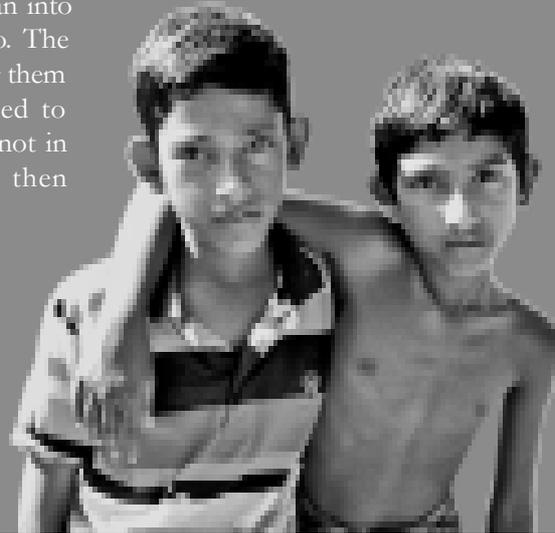
*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

## Children's Action against a Rape Case, Andhra Pradesh, India

In September 2000, an adult in Kadri raped a 3-year-old child. For the first time, union members and child sangha members came together. Union members, local press, another local NGO and children from sanghas in six villages united to organise a rally and submit a petition to the police. When the police ridiculed the children's attempts and said that the incident had happened somewhere far from their homes, the children said they were expressing solidarity with the girls' parents, who faced more violence, and that they

expected adults to be sensitive to the issue. The police promised to take the accused man into custody immediately, but did not do so. The children challenged the police, criticising them for their lack of action and threatened to submit a complaint if the accused was not in custody within 10 days. The police then brought the man into custody.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*



### 3.3 Commercial and Sexual Exploitation (Including Trafficking) of Boys and Girls

Boys and girls in South and Central Asia are being increasingly commercially and sexually exploited by adults, including family members.

Working children in South and Central Asia have reported that their employers and clients subject them to all kinds of violence and abuse. The fact that working children are the only earners in their families and are usually left at the mercy of the employers, with nobody to

take care of them, has made them more vulnerable to violence.

Lured by promises of work, many children in the region have said that they have been commercially and sexually exploited. They also said that employers exploit them in the same manner. Apart from not being justly paid or not being paid at all, they are also subjected to sexual abuse.

***"The owner at the workplace harasses us. We are also harassed by middlemen and local goondas (thugs) who take away our hard-earned money."***

- Children working in incense factory, hotel or as rag picker in India (CWC, India, 1998)

***"I work for an older boy who beats me if I do not make enough money for food and cigarettes."***

- A boy aged 10 in Dushanbe, Central Asia (Save the Children, 2002)

***"When the employers beat us I sometimes feel like hitting back, but I cannot do that or I will lose my job and my family will go without food."***

- A 13-year-old working boy in Lahore, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

***"I was so scared; it was terrible to live in the employer's house. The employer and the employer's family treated me like an animal; they shouted at my every move and gave me punishment."***

- A 13-year-old domestic worker in Pakistan (UNICEF, 2001)

***"I was hungry and when a hotel manager offered me food and shelter in exchange for work, I agreed. He ended up sexually exploiting me."***

- A boy in Pir Wadhai, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2000)

***"Boys told me that the only way to learn driving is to enter into a sexual relationship with my teacher. All of them do it. Most of the long distance bus and truck drivers keep boys for sexual services."***

- A 16-year-old boy in Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2000)

***"They used to give us money if we took off our panties, Later on, they began to touch or kiss us."***

- A 15-year-old poor girl in Kathmandu, Nepal recalling the incident when she was 7 years old  
(Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

Other prevalent forms of commercial and sexual exploitation of children in South and Central Asia occur through trafficking, sex tourism and pornography.

Children trafficked in the region end up working in the informal sector, in agriculture, as domestic workers and even as slaves. Young boys are sent to western Asia as camel jockeys where many lose their lives or become disabled. Trafficking also leads many children into the sex trade and the sale of body organs.

Girls from the poorest areas of the region are being taken by organised rings to big city sex trade establishments where the fear of HIV/AIDS has increased the demand for virgins and children. Many clients mistakenly believe that children have fewer chances of contracting the virus and the disease. Similarly, there is a myth

that a man can rid himself of sexually transmitted diseases if he sleeps with a virgin. As a result, there is a greater demand for girls between the ages of 10 and 12. They are sold for the highest price.

Poor economic conditions, poverty, unemployment, an upsurge in international organised crime, the low status of girls, lack of education, inadequate or non-existent legislation and/or poor law enforcement all contribute to the increase in child trafficking. The caste system and a history of bonded labour mean that tribal and low-caste children are more likely to be trafficked than others. Various studies have shown that a majority of the children trafficked are from large families, children abused by fathers or stepfathers and children left homeless or orphaned by natural disasters such as mud slides, cyclones and floods.

## CHILDREN'S ACTIONS

### Children's Congress, Dhaka

Children's Congress in Dhaka was established in 1996 and consists of approximately 100 child representatives from 12 different NGOs. An election process developed in 1997, allowing children to vote for an 11-member executive committee for a 2-year term. The elected members have delegated responsibilities and meet once a month. Children's Congress was formed to promote children's participation in issues affecting them in their communities and organisations, and to increase awareness of children's rights. The congress has organised programmes, including rallies against lead pollution; a press conference on free treatment for children in hospitals; dramas on child trafficking, child abuse, HIV and child marriage, and participation in several seminars and workshops on child labour and the sexual exploitation of children. During Child Rights Week in 1998, representatives of Children's Congress met with the prime minister of Bangladesh.



*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### Bhowani Child Club, Eastern Nepal

Bhowani Child Club started in 1997 with support from a local organisation and Save the Children US. The club has approximately 80 members; 50 boys and 30 girls aged 8-18. Girls face more discrimination and have not been so encouraged by parents to become club members. The children meet at least once a month, and sometimes more often. They maintain a registration book, a book of minutes and a visitor's book. Club members pay a Rs. 2 membership fee per month. They raised additional funds from the local community to build a clubhouse constructed in the local style. The children have also started a children's library within the clubhouse.

The children felt that they have gained considerably from being part of the child club:

- They have access to information about their rights.
- They have raised awareness of child rights in their village through dramas, plays and other programmes.
- They have raised various issues such as school enrolment, birth registration, child abuse, child marriage and trafficking, health and sanitation (e.g. vaccinations, diarrhoea).

The children felt that Bhowani Child Club had brought about significant change locally. Children found that they had their own views and that they were increasingly recognised within their families and villages as people with opinions and suggestions. Club members helped establish a Village Development Committee (VDC) level network of child clubs that met once a month, and in recent years they have been able to share their experiences with children from other child clubs.

## VOICES and ACTIONS

of Girls and Boys to end Violence against Children  
in South and Central Asia

The children were also eager to develop better relations with higher level officials in the VDC so that child rights concerns could be addressed in a serious manner. They felt that the VDC and district level officials did not take children or child clubs seriously. They were keen to find solutions to the challenges that they face and to build meaningful partnerships with adult authorities at higher levels. Children felt that further training in communication (drama, speeches, etc.) would help them to be taken more seriously by adults. They were also seeking funds so they could go on tours to visit, share and learn from experiences of other child clubs in the country and region.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*



### Asha Child Club, Siraha, Nepal

Children in Siraha, through Asha Child Club's campaign against oppression and exploitation of children, make home visits to explain to parents about child abuse and mistreatment. They perform street theatre to help people realise the problems associated with girls being taken across the border to India as sex workers. They also spread awareness about problems related to early marriage and the importance of birth registration.

*(From Strength to Strength, Children's Initiatives and Organisation, South & Central Asia, Save the Children, 2004)*

## 3.4 Gender-based Violence

Both boys and girls throughout South and Central Asia have, during consultations and research, said that they have been victims of violence as a result of their gender. Particular forms of violence such as sexual abuse, trafficking, prostitution, honour killing, dowry related abuse, early marriage and acid attacks are disproportionately directed against girls. Girls also face intense psychological pressure, forced to conform to socially defined gender stereotypes.

Other forms of violence such as recruitment into armed conflict, drug gangs and street gangs

involve a greater proportion of boys as both victims and perpetrators. Physical punishment is more often inflicted upon boys on the assumption that they will grow up to be "proper men" as defined by male-dominated societies. Police and staff in jails and in detention facilities may beat or sexually abuse boys more than girls. Boys also suffer the psychological pressure in society of being men and masculine.

However, there are more cases of violence against women and girls than boys. The patriarchal system shapes gender relations and encourages gender stereotyping, making girls

more susceptible to violence. It endows fathers and sons with greater access to and control over resources, decision-making, participation and mobility. In such societies, males are considered superior while females are treated as subordinates and inferiors. These attitudes towards girls and the extraordinary power of men, reinforced by society, the state, the legal system and religion lead to disproportionate violence against girls. Discriminatory inheritance laws also undermine women's economic empowerment and are a cause of violence against women and girls.

The vulnerability of girls is accentuated by the fact that the market economy, commercialisation and mechanisation of agriculture have further marginalised women in South Asia by replacing their work and by increasing male control over cash and resources. Girls are needed less in the market economy.

However, being aware of the risks girls face and their vulnerability in society, even boys have expressed their concern over teasing and harassment, which are everyday problems for girls in the region.

Acid attacks, an expression of gender-based violence, is widespread in countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. Children in the region have accused male members of the society

of throwing acid on girls, and further pointed out the absence of any legal measures to stop them. Likewise, killing innocent girls in the name of honour is another issue in the region.

Children in the region also say that girls who are forced to do household chores in their own families or to work as house maids for other families are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse. Girls are abused for committing minor mistakes in their work by adult family members or by their employers.

Boys and girls in South and Central Asia have also expressed serious concern over early marriage. It often leads to psychological, physical and at times sexual abuse by the mother-in-law, other family members and even the husband. However, girls who have been sexually abused are blamed for the act, and then discriminated against by the family and community. As a result, many girls turn to the streets where they are forced to become sex workers to make a living.

Girls in the region also shared their experiences of discrimination by family members, the neighbourhood and the community. In fact, both boys and girls say their gender contributes to them becoming victims of violence. However, girls find themselves more vulnerable. Sometimes they are even threatened by their male peers.

***"I am never allowed to go out. If I do, both my mother and brother hit me. When we go out, people in the community look at us as if they have never seen us. They talk behind our back and call us names."***

- A girl child worker in India (CWC, India, 1998)

***"Teasing and harassment of girls are everyday problems."***

- A boy student of Grade 7 in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"I have to work more, do heavy work and get beaten more because I am a boy."***

- A South Asian boy (Save the Children, 2001)

***"Because we are boys we are expected to protect our family honour. This involves us in fighting. But we don't like it."***

- A 13-year-old boy in Peshawar, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

*"I was just 15 years old and was studying in Grade 9, when my dreams shattered. I was attacked with acid for refusing a marriage proposal. You can imagine the physical pain of having acid thrown over your face and body, but the pain of social stigma is worse than physical pain and can last forever."* - A girl acid victim girl in Bangladesh (Save the Children, OSCAR, 1999)

*"Why are there so many honour killings? And why are only girls and women killed? Why?"*  
- A 13-year-old girl in Peshawar, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

*"At work on the streets, girls often face harassment from older boys and men."*  
- A child worker in India (Butterflies, 2001)

*"When a party has been held at home and many utensils have been used, the girl has to wash all of them keeping in mind that if any of these utensils break, she will be badly beaten."*  
- A girl in Grade 7 in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"When I was raped by my brother-in-law, I told my husband about it but he threw me out of the house and ended our marriage. He told me I was bad and that I had dishonoured him, the family and the community. He forced me into the streets. That was the beginning of my life as a sex worker."*  
- A 14-year-old child sex worker in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"My father married a girl and I was married in exchange. I had been happy with my friends. Now I have a lot of work to do at my husband's house. I did not want to marry. Now I am always sick. I feel the presence of spirits and ghosts. I want to run to the hills but the people don't allow me. I want to leave this place. Please, don't take my friends to their husband's house."* - A 12-year-old Afghan refugee girl in Pakistan (Save the Children, Afghanistan, 2001)

*"My husband used to punish me a lot by tying me up and whipping me with a bamboo cane. He would do it until the lashes caused my back to bleed. When I fainted during the torture he would wait for me to regain consciousness and start all over again. On one occasion, I lost consciousness three times."*  
- A 16-year-old in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"I am afraid of walking to school. I am afraid of kidnappers and the boys tease the girls, but if I tell my parents then they will stop me going to school."*  
- An 8-year-old girl in Peshawar, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

*"Because of workload at home, girls in school cannot succeed as boys, and then they are scolded in bad ways by their parents."*  
- A 14-year-old girl in Nepal (Save the Children, OSCAR, 1999)

*"I am sad when someone beats the children and they are crying especially if a girl wants to go to school and the mother beats her, then I feel sad."*  
- A girl aged 11-14 years in Mazar, Afghanistan (Save the Children, Afghanistan, 2003)

## CHILDREN'S ACTIONS

### Shishu Parishad takes Action on Early Child Marriage, Tangail, Bangladesh

Children from two villages in Tangail, mostly girls belonging to different *shishu parishads* (child club/committee), developed dramas depicting concerns about child marriage. Confidently overcoming traditional barriers, the girls' groups in the first village presented their drama to a crowd of about 200, including some male village elders. The play highlighted negative impacts of early child marriage and the actions shishu parishad members were taking to end the practice.

In the second village, another group of girls and one boy presented a drama that told the true story of a 13-year-old girl from their village who was married and died at 14 after a miscarriage. She had health problems during her pregnancy but her in-laws prevented her from seeing a doctor. Shishu parishad members requested journalists to cover the case, and ETV, a mainstream Bangladeshi television company, broadcast the story.

The children undertook a survey of early child marriages in their village. They found that 65 children under 18 years old had been married during the past year. A nine-year-old girl was the youngest child married, with most married children being 13 or 14 years old. The children shared their results with adults and engaged in discussions on the negative impacts of early child marriage. They sought support from local NGOs and Save the Children Australia to bring together religious and community leaders and other influential people to form a committee against child marriage. Members of the *upazila* level shishu parishad knew of five cases where children had succeeded in preventing early child marriage. Child journalists also wrote an article about this in their newsletter.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### Girl's Participation in Creating Safe Spaces, Nepal

In 1999, Save the Children UK researched the problems of girls in Ramghat Village Development Committee in Surkhet. The girls discussed the low value they experienced as females and the difficulties they faced: heavy workloads, restricted mobility, early marriage and fears for their personal safety. During the discussions, a core group of



## VOICES and ACTIONS

of Girls and Boys to end Violence against Children  
in South and Central Asia

18 girls (members of nine different child clubs, each from a different ward) decided to work together to effect positive change.

Save the Children began supporting the girls to undertake a project to show their capacity and potential to create safe spaces for girls. Both school going and non-school going girls were involved in the project. The group met regularly to carry out information gathering and analysis of unsafe and safe spaces and activities for girls in their localities. Travelling to school, collecting wood or water, going to markets, festivals or relatives' houses on foot/by bus were found to be unsafe since boys, neighbours, police or teachers could threaten them. This analysis, their new knowledge and understanding of gender, and the increased self-esteem they gained through participating in the project led the girls to negotiate for change. They met with community members and authorities to raise awareness and call for action to bring about the changed behaviour, attitudes and service delivery required to transform unsafe spaces to safe ones, to improve girls' mobility and provide access to public services and opportunities. The girls have continued to protest against any incident of harassment or abuse of girls. The girls' group has developed strong linkages with village and district level child club networks, the district child welfare committee, the local police, teachers and women's groups, as well as the local decision-making body - the VDC. All of these actors now recognise the group as a crucial agent for improving the lives of girls in the community. The girls' initiative has resulted in positive behaviour and attitude changes among teachers, boys, parents and community members towards girls. Furthermore, the girls have become more confident, articulate and able to negotiate for necessary changes in their families and communities.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*



### 3.5 Children in Conflict with the Law

Children in conflict with the law are beaten, tortured, sexually assaulted and sometimes killed. Girls and boys are arrested for begging or working as vendors in public places. Some children are involved in criminal activities because adult criminals are exploiting them. Often the police profit from such activities by taking bribes from these children and their adult exploiters. Political parties use street children to throw bombs/bricks at the police, vehicular traffic and at political processions. Children are also used by criminal gangs for transporting arms, trafficking narcotics, collecting tolls and alms, snatching and pick pocketing.

While it is important to prevent minor offences and serious crimes, it is even more important to secure the well-being and rights of all children in conflict with the law. Children who come into conflict with the law often do not get the protection provided by the constitutional and legal systems of the countries in the region. Being on the streets makes them vulnerable to kidnapping, trafficking, being lured or forced into criminal activities or commercial work. The dynamics of street life and the stigmatisation they face drive these children into conflict with the law, exposing them to violence from law

enforcers. Police perceive street children as vagrants and criminals. They are easy targets because they are young, often small, poor and ignorant of their rights, and lack responsible adult guidance and care.

Children in conflict with the law (street children, street working children, child prostitutes, child labourers) in every country in the region have voiced their concern over the increasing rate of violence exercised by security agents on the streets as well as in detention centres. During raids, children are beaten and locked up in police stations, where they are harassed and physically and sexually abused. Boys and girls have also expressed concern over the mistreatment of rag pickers by the general public. Children have said that those who come into conflict with the law face regular physical and verbal abuse from police.

Children, especially those on the streets, have readily pointed out the rough behaviour of so-called protectors of the public. The police demands bribes from children, arrests them for no reason, forces them to own up to crimes that they have not committed and torture and sexually abuse them in detention centres.

***"The police catch innocent children for no reason and they send them to prison. It is not the child's fault if he/she had to live on the street. We do not have other options. The police ask for bribes, snatch our little money and if you do not pay them, you cannot work. When they get bored they kick us while we are sleeping. They lock us inside wagons and call their friends to do 'bad things' to us."***

- A 13-year-old in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

***"When I was gathering garbage I was arrested by the police, they took my money and hit me, they took me to the police station and they were tugging my ears."***

- A street worker, refugee boy in Peshawar (Save the Children, Afghanistan, 2001)

***"They take us into custody, beat us, make us suffer...in that children's custody we were beaten so much..."***

- A 13-16 year old street child in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Central Asia (Save the Children UK, 2004)

***"When they arrest us, they swear on us. They beat us severely for hours, making us bleed from the mouth and making us sustain bruises all over the body."***

- An 11-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"I was severely beaten all over the body, and the investigating officer demanded Rs. 50,000 to release me."* - A 15-year-old boy in Lahore, Pakistan (Save the Children, Pakistan, 2002)

*"They take you to a place which is a bit bigger than this cabinet, and that cabinet has bars. They take you to that place and lock you up, and then they will ask their boss what to do. So whatever their chief says to do with us they will do. One of them insulted one of us, and then another policeman beat the boy's head with a club, he lost consciousness..."*

- A 13-16 year old boy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, Central Asia (Save the Children UK, 2004)

*"Newcomers are pestered and searched by the prisoners and drug addicts for money. We are beaten if we don't have money. Sometimes the police take all our money."*

- A 15-year-old boy in Bangladesh (Save the Children UK, Bangladesh)

*"We heard that in court we have to say that we are guilty in the presence of the magistrate. It is a custom. If we don't do so the police will torture us and we will be sent back into police custody."*

- A 13-year-old boy in Bangladesh (Save the Children UK, Bangladesh)

*"The police are bad and army are even worse. The army and police always have sex with us. Then when they finish with us they are supposed to pay, they say, 'Do you want money from us? Are you mad? Do you want to go to prison?' They are worse than normal people."*

- A 15-year-old sex worker in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"The other girls in jail tried to do bad things to us by force. When we complained to the guard women, they in turn complained against us and told the offenders to beat us up."*

- A 12-year-old girl in Bangladesh (Save the Children UK, Bangladesh)

*"They kick the children in jail and even use a baton. They connected wires to our hands and gave us electric shocks. They made us urinate in a bucket, which had electricity and water in it."*

- A 16-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"They raped me for six or seven hours. I did not report it to the police because I was afraid that the police would take me to prison where they could do bad things to me."*

- A 15-year-old girl in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

*"The torture of poor street children by the police is increasing every day. And it is because of this that many of these street children are adopting wrong behaviours. Children are kept in jail alongside hardened criminals."*

- A 14-year-old boy in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2003)

Juvenile offenders in South and Central Asia also talked about violence, including physical and sexual abuse that they face in prison where they are normally kept together with adult prisoners. Senior inmates as well as jail authorities are, according to the children,

responsible for perpetrating violence against them. Children in the region say that law enforcement agents use special punishment for getting false statements from them. Officials in shelter homes also beat children under rehabilitation.

## CHILDREN'S ACTIONS

### Street Children take Action against Police Violations, Delhi, India

In 2001, children of the Bal Mazdoor (Child Labourer) Union in Delhi took a letter expressing their concerns about abuse they suffered from police to the DCP (Deputy Commissioner of Police) at Darya Ganj Police Station. The DCP met the children's delegation and also told them they could come see him again. He sent the children's letter to the crime ranch for an enquiry to be made into violations by police against street children. The vigilance department has sent information that they are investigating the police. However, continued monitoring and efforts at many levels are required since street children continue to be beaten daily by the police.

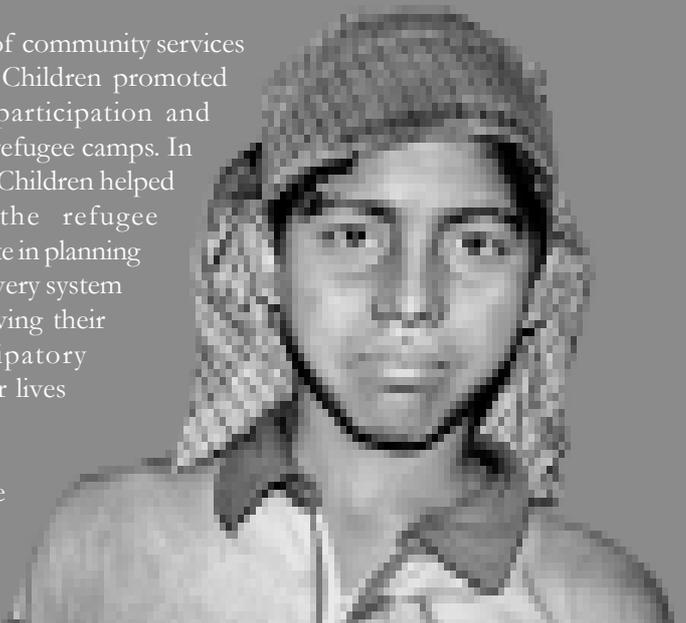
*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### Girls and Boys participate in Refugee Camp Governance, NWFP, Pakistan

In response to the influx of refugees fleeing the conflict in Afghanistan, Kotkai refugee camp, designed to accommodate 15,000 refugees, was established in November 2001. Save the Children Sweden worked with the Social Welfare Cell (SWC), Commissionerate of Afghan Refugees (CAR) to provide community services while Save the Children UK was responsible for child protection monitoring.

By supporting the development of community services and child protection, Save the Children promoted opportunities for children's participation and community participation in the refugee camps. In cooperation with SWC, Save the Children helped establish mechanisms so the refugee communities could fully participate in planning and implementing the social delivery system and become self reliant. By solving their problems through a participatory approach, they could make their lives as normal as possible.

Child-to-child groups were developed as part of the overall strategy. Furthermore, the child



## VOICES and ACTIONS

of Girls and Boys to end Violence against Children  
in South and Central Asia

protection monitoring strategy included the formation of reflect-action circles among girls, boys, youth, women and men that used participatory visual activities to explore important issues. The aims of the participatory sessions with children were to help them identify the problems they faced, to analyse the causes and potential solutions, to explore and redefine power relations and to communicate with the concerned camp officials to have these issues addressed. Children made fortnightly presentations to the camp and agency officials. The children in Kotkai refugee camp worked in collaboration with the concerned agency officials. It became a model for children's participation in camp governance.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*

### **An Example of the Children's Reflect-Action activities and meetings with authorities**

Following some reflect-action activities during which girls', youth and women's issues were represented visually on charts, a meeting was arranged between the refugees and camp administrators concerning governance decisions. The impact was very positive for both children and adults. For example, during the meeting, girls as young as five years old voiced some issues that concerned them and got an immediate response from the adults. These young girls said they were being subjected to physical violence by security guards. The agency administrators promised to follow up on it. The children also raised issues about the scarcity of schoolbooks and the lack of a water tank in their school. Concerned NGOs provided the necessary books the very next day and a water tank was also installed. Furthermore, a schedule was devised for administrators to visit the school twice a week and talk with the children to make sure that things were progressing. As a result of Save the Children and the Social Welfare Cell's participatory approach to working with children in Kotkai camp, many other agencies have also decided to change their working style to empower all age groups and involve them in governance.

*(Claire O'Kane, Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Highlighting Positive Impact, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003)*



# 4 Recommendations by Children



*“With various types of injustice and abuse against children at home, the workplace and elsewhere, it seems children are very neglected. We want a society where children are not subjected to abuse and rather get their due benefits to have a better life. Please protest wherever you see children being harmed or abused.”*

– Save the Children Alliance in Bangladesh, 2001

While taking part in national or regional consultations or as primary sources for researchers, girls and boys in South and Central Asia have put forth their own recommendations on ways to stop the various types of violence inflicted against them. Some of the recommendations were:

## Physical and Psychological Abuse

- **“Parents should take care; provide adequate love and affection to their children.”** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)
- **“Teachers should not beat the students; they should not insult and humiliate the children.”** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)
- **“We want teachers to be kind to everybody in the class and not only take care of the ones they think are intelligent.”** (Save the Children, 2002/03)
- **“Eliminate all kinds of discrimination, including**

**economic, social and gender discrimination.”** (Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)

- **“I have this message for the president of Pakistan, that disabled children should be protected. They have a right to life.”** (Save the Children, 2002)

Despite the horrifying and sometimes sadistic nature of beatings, children did not sound vindictive during consultations. They were practical. They wanted to be told what mistakes they made so they have a chance not to repeat them. Very often they are beaten and have no idea what for.

## Child Sexual Abuse

- **“If the message that rape, trafficking and violence against children are illegal comes from the prime minister through television programmes, people will be afraid to do it.”** (UNICEF, 2003)

- ***“Children should be protected from child sexual abuse by strict implementation of the law and severely punishing the offenders.”*** (Save the Children, 2002)
- ***“Educate adults on the issue of child sex abuse.”*** (Save the Children Norway/CWIN, Nepal, 2003)
- ***“We feel an urgent need for health services and psychological support for child survivors of sex abuse.”*** (Save the Children Norway/CWIN Nepal, 2003)
- ***“Child survivors of sexual abuse should not only be treated as victims. They should be empowered and encouraged to live a dignified life.”*** (Save the Children Norway/CWIN Nepal, 2003)

#### Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of children (including child trafficking)

- ***“Severe punishment to be meted out for people involved in child trafficking.”*** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)
- ***“If parents collaborate with the law enforcement agents, traffickers can be identified and through the traffickers, it would be possible to discover where all the missing children are kept. Moreover, the police have to monitor the situation of children in border areas. Parents do not know that it is dangerous to give their children away.”*** (UNICEF, 2003)
- ***“I want my government to find the other children who were trafficked with me. Bring them back!”*** (UNICEF, 2003)
- ***“I wish the disabled children would not be forced to do the work they cannot do.”*** (Save the Children, 2002/03)
- ***“Children should not be allowed to work. They should be put into schools.”*** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)

- ***“Children working in houses as maid servants must be freed or the family where the child works must be required to ensure their basic rights. Otherwise, the children’s lives will be ruined.”*** (UNICEF, 2003)

#### Gender-based Violence

- ***“Girls and boys should be provided equal opportunities for education. Adequate protection for girls outside the home and child marriages should be eradicated. Legislation to be more girl-friendly.”*** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)
- ***“I want my government to stop early marriages because they make me feel sad and they have deprived me of my freedom of choice and robbed me of my adolescence.”*** (UNICEF, 2003)
- ***“We want girls to be protected from abuse on the streets and at home.”*** A rag picker boy in Bangalore, India (Save the Children, UNICEF, Plan India, World Vision, IGSSS, CRS, GMC, 2001)

#### Children in Conflict with the law

- ***“Police should not pick up street children without any specific charge against them.”*** (Shoshur Bari, Save the Children UK, Bangladesh, 2000)
- ***“Children must be taken to a counselling centre instead of the police station. They should be interrogated in the presence of independent agents.”*** (Shoshur Bari, Save the Children UK, Bangladesh, 2000)
- ***“The police should not beat the runaway children but try to restore them to the families or facilitate admissions into children’s homes.”*** GMC (Save the Children and UNICEF, 2001)
- ***“Juvenile offenders need protection from torture.”*** (Save the Children, 2002)

# 5 Conclusion



The many faces of violence as encountered and described by children in South and Central Asia, not only cause immediate damage to their physical and psychological growth, but also leave a lasting negative impact on their personal enhancement as active citizens. The structure of societies in South and Central Asia is built upon patriarchy, inequity, discrimination and exploitation, where children, the powerless cross section of society, are the easiest victims of violence. Therefore, ending violence against children requires not only addressing visible factors, but also dealing with the underlying causes that produce and reproduce violence.

### **Advocacy for Creation of Child-Friendly Spaces and Mechanisms (including policies and budgets)**

It is imperative that governments in South and Central Asia invest in creating child-friendly safe spaces for children where they can share their voices and concerns and recommend actions to end violence against children. This requires time, human and financial resources, sensitivity to child development and child rights and an increased capacity. This also requires the development of child-friendly information in local languages, using both print and visual media. A child-centred juvenile justice system must also be developed but with a very clear priority on deviation methods and with the active participation of children and communities.

### **Capacity Building of Adults**

Governments, NGOs, corporations and academia have to be capacitated on the ethical and meaningful participation of children in programme development with special focus on child protection. Adults must be trained in acquiring and using non-violent tools of child development like positive discipline techniques for teachers and parents.

### **Capacity Building of Children**

Children need to be capacitated by other children and adults on children's participation and collective action. Children must explore the concept of non-violent methods of development that give them more responsibility without violating other children's rights, like how to counter bullying in schools, workplaces and institutions.

### **Support Child Led Organisations**

There are unique examples of children's collective action to end violence against boys and girls in South and Central Asia. It is vital that these efforts are encouraged and further supported.

### **Research and Development**

It is clear from the mapping that there is a need for further in-depth research with children on their understanding of violence and their recommendations to end violence in the region.

Special focus has to be given to marginalised groups like children below the age of 12, children with mental and physical disabilities, minority and tribal children, children in acute circumstances, etc.

Since children are socialised within a structure of violence early on, support must be given to parents and families so they can offer children a non-violent space based on sound relationships that focus on gender equity and positive masculine behaviour. Parents, teachers and other caregivers must be able to exercise positive discipline as an alternative to physical and degrading/humiliating punishment. Schools and other institutions should offer education that shapes non-violent attitudes. Bullying and other forms of abuse of children by children must be addressed.

Children's participation needs to be encouraged in families, communities and all other spheres of society. Children should have access to child-friendly and relevant information so they are equipped with preventive measures against sexual abuse and other forms of violence.

Community-based support structures involving children need to be promoted to protect children from violence including sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Initiatives that ensure protection to the most vulnerable groups such as children in conflict with the law, street and working children, and especially girls living on the streets must be undertaken urgently.

The UN Study on Violence Against Children has brought children to the forefront of policy dialogues. It is essential that children's voices, concerns and actions are recognised and registered in follow-up actions.

## Annex 1

### STATEMENT BY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Children and Young People's Consultation for South Asia Regional MTR of Yokohama Global Commitment, 2001 27 – 28 September 2004, Colombo

We the South Asian children (16 girls and 8 boys) participating from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka met for 2 days (27-28 September, 2004) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to share and discuss our experiences and achievements and the gaps and challenges related to sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. This consultation resulted in the following priority recommendations to be initiated in 2005 and then monitored and evaluated by the end of 2006.

#### Overall Recommendation

Strengthen and support the participation of girls and boys from different backgrounds (age, abilities, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, etc.) and build their capacity to work against sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. Ensure that sufficient budgets are allocated to these recommendations that are based on previous promises that were made in Yokohama. We ourselves need to strengthen our partnership with adults to create supportive spaces and opportunities for active and effective participation.

#### Specific Recommendations

##### Prevention

Each country to initiate a pilot project. Identify the most severely hit area/village (only one per country) and in this area ensure:

- 50% school enrolment (through setting up schools at convenient distances which are providing quality education)
- creation of opportunities through ensuring that 50% of the targeted population is

economically self reliant (by providing life skills education and livelihood skills training, particularly to female headed families and by providing life skills training and bank loans to out of school children and vulnerable children for creation of their own enterprises)

- raising awareness on child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and the consequences of trafficking to parents
- Capacity building for police, doctors, nurses and concerned government officials on how to deal with child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

##### Protection

- Special police and courts particularly for children affected by sexual exploitation in each country. These courts should exist at all levels (local, district and higher) and be child-centred and child-friendly. For instance five judges in each case before these courts to help prevent corruption, such as the bribing of judges. At least three of the five judges should agree on the decisions that are made.
- Ensure penalty of life sentence for adults found guilty of sexual exploitation and trafficking and it should apply to all people who offend, including police. Young offenders should be given an opportunity to improve through rehabilitation.
- Children should be protected during court proceedings and should not be exposed to the media but the abuser should be shown in the media.
- The children of sex workers who are at risk should be provided with safe homes/

spaces to prevent these children from being forced into prostitution.

- Many countries have their own laws, so destination countries should have strict laws to deal with traffickers and abusers who traffic children into their countries.

### **Participation**

- The formation of a National Children's Task Force funded by the government and represented by young people from all sectors and all lifestyles (rural, urban, school-going, out of school, disabled, child labourers, children forced into prostitution, children growing up in brothels, HIV affected children, etc.) to ensure the participation of children in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NPAs on sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and other child rights commitments.
- Young people's participation in local governance by involving NGOs in the facilitation of children's participation. This will raise the children's issues and reinforce better implementation of programmes related to sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.
- Developing capacities of girls and boys through life skills education facilitated by peer educators. A number of children will be brought from different areas, representing different issues, and will meet on a national level for capacity building given by NGOs, the government and other children. These children would become

peer leaders and could then return to their areas and train other young people.

### **Recovery and Reintegration**

- Child-friendly and supportive counselling should be provided to the affected children. Children should not be threatened and they should be provided with quality education.
- Proper monitoring of recovery institutions should be made on a regular basis. Institutions should maintain good relations with parents (of the affected child) and communities to improve the quality of work with children. Special measures to deal with HIV/AIDS positive young people affected by child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.
- Affected children should be given training to allow them to help other children to act as mentors on recovering mechanisms and focus on resilience.

### **Cooperation and Coordination**

- To strengthen sharing of information, material and experiences between countries, between children, between governments. Firstly to share the NPAs.
- Establishment of a special regional police to monitor sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

We need to ensure that all the activities above are undertaken. There also needs to be a monitoring body in place with active participation of children.

Annex 2

YOUNG SOUTH ASIANS ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS<sup>10</sup>  
South Asia Regional Forum for Young People on HIV/AIDS  
15-18 December 2002, Kathmandu

We the children and young people from South Asia know that our governments from South Asia promised at SAARC meetings, UNGASS on HIV/AIDS and the recent Special Session on Children to work with children and young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In our South Asia Regional Forum for young people on HIV/AIDS we agreed to work with our governments, to help them keep the promises they made.

We therefore call on our governments (at national, sub-national and local levels) to respect and realise the following rights:

We assert our rights to participation in ensuring policy making and making political commitment.

- Governments to commit themselves to involve children and young people in developing and implementing policies that affect us. This will ensure children and young people friendly policies, the effects of which will be multiplied throughout the nation.
- National governments should initiate a high level council including children and young people and key adults such as planners and policy makers and form a strong committee and network.
- Governments should allocate special funds in their budgets on HIV/AIDS programmes for the involvement of children and young people. They must ensure children and young people's participation while making budgets.

We assert our rights in influencing and mobilising key adults (parents, teachers, religious and community leaders).

- Governments to ensure that parents, teachers, community and religious leaders are given the proper training in providing sexual reproductive health education, including HIV/AIDS, the use of condoms and protection from drug use to students before young people are sexually active and before most of the students drop out of school.
- Governments must ensure that young people's committees (parliaments, clubs, children's organisations, etc.) are established at village, sub-national (district, provincial and state) and national levels. This will enable young people to express themselves and to participate in decision-making forums.

We assert our rights to participation in ensuring access to information on sexual reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, life skills education and young people-friendly services.

- Governments to include sexual reproductive health education, including HIV/AIDS, in formal and non-formal curricula starting from grade 5.
- Recognise that young people have special needs and therefore provide health facilities to children and young people so that they can speak openly in a confidential environment.
- Governments should provide free HIV voluntary counselling and testing at sub-national levels and also provide follow-up support services.
- Governments should be responsible to provide training to children and young people in and out of school on life skills to work as peer educators/facilitators.

- Governments should ensure that correct information is provided at all levels to remove fear about HIV/AIDS.
- Children and young people should be involved in preparing children and young people-friendly HIV/AIDS awareness materials.

We assert our rights to participation in using media as a tool for spreading information and producing children and young people-friendly programmes.

- Governments should ensure that young people have opportunities to produce television and radio programmes, and provide spaces in newspapers, magazines and websites.
- Governments should support media programmes that include popular personalities who can talk about issues that concern children and young people, such as healthy life styles and HIV/AIDS.

We assert our rights to participation in reducing stigma and discrimination and increasing care and support.

- Government, community and religions leaders should ensure participation of children and young people affected by HIV/AIDS in all related committees and HIV/AIDS issues.
- Local government bodies should allocate funds for care and support of affected families.
- Governments to introduce laws and polices against discriminations and stigma of people affected by AIDS.

Finally we assert our rights to participation in HIV/AIDS programming, including research, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We commit ourselves to form our own organisations and networks that will work towards educating children and young people and adults as well, about child rights and especially on their right to be protected from HIV/AIDS. We and our governments must work together in arranging follow-up forums to ensure monitoring and evaluation of the work done in involving children and young people.

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### **The mission**

Save the Children fights for children's rights.  
We deliver immediate and lasting improvements  
to children's lives worldwide.



### **The vision**

- Save the Children works for:
- a world which respects and values each child
  - a world which listens to children and learns
  - a world where all children have hope and opportunity

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