

STATE LEVEL CONSULTATIONS ON CHILDREN IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

(Child Marriage, Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation – CABA/Child VOCSET/SGBT (Child Sex Tourism), Children Impacted by Disaster)

A state level consultation on children in difficult circumstance (CIDC) was conducted on 18th July, 2016 in room number 911, Christ University, Bengaluru from 9.30 AM to 4.30 PM. The programme was supported by PLAN India and jointly organized by the Academy of Gandhian Studies, Association for Promoting Social Action, Manav Charities and Department of Social



work, Christ University, Bengaluru. Scalability

The programme started by inviting all the guests to the dais by students of Christ University which was followed by welcome address by Ms. Brinda Adige. Mr. Gopalakrishna Murthy – AGS gave the background and objectives of the consultation where he explained the need for

developing a platform where a dialogue, information and innovative ideas could take place among multiple stakeholders in issues concerning children in difficult circumstances, promotion of knowledge management, formation of consortium and building of forums where voices of children and youth can be heard to drive better policies. Ms. Anita Kumar, PLAN India gave

Plan India's perspective on CIDC where she spoke about Plan, which is a member of Plan International Federation, a nationally registered independent child development organization and is committed to creating a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, their families and communities. She



also mentioned about the relevance of "Plan for every child" initiative taken by Plan India which is a plan to foster dialogue, exchange ideas, and innovative thinking on children's rights.

The inaugural address was given by Mr. Sanjay Sahai, ADGP – Public Grievances and Human Rights where he discussed about the importance of having a calling in life and a social service mindset to deliver effectively. He also spoke about legality vs reality in India and the gap in execution of plans in our country. He mentioned the need for converting intangible plans to tangible ones which are robust, dependable and irreversible. He also stated that collaboration and transparency in a data driven world needs to be at the core of all interventions along with an oversight mechanism. He concluded by saying that technology and innovation is future of the world and ‘will’ is what finally counts. The inaugural address was followed by felicitation by Dr. Victor Paul, HOD, Department of Social Work, Christ University. Dr. Mallika Krishnaswamy, Dean Humanities and Social Sciences, Christ University gave the Presidential



address where she pointed out the need for having transparent and accountable system to address the needs of CIDC. Mr. Umesh Aaradhya, member, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, New Delhi, gave opening remarks about the importance of awareness, protection and laws regarding CIDC in the country. Mr.

Lakshapathi, APSA, delivered the vote of thanks for the inaugural session.

Panel Session One : Child Labor

The first session on Child Labor and was moderated by Mr. Lakshapathi, APSA. The panelists included Ms. Kavita Ratna, from The Concerned for Working Children, Ms. Kathyayini from CIVIC and Mr. William Christopher from International Justice Mission(IJM). Ms. Kavita Ratna dealt with the strategies and challenges in combatting Child Labor. She mentioned about clean-up approach by the state in Railways, lack of accountability within the government and NGOs, issues regarding addressing the real needs of children, problems in the complaint mechanism etc. She mentioned that the beacon of hope in Karnataka has been the

commencement of children Gram Sabha and her recommendations were to decentralize the problems, have tailor made solutions for children, strengthen the local government to look into the issue of child rights holistically, converge government strategies in rescue and rehabilitation, start community monitoring etc. She also called for a cautious approach towards CSR and process integrity. Ms. Kathyayini from CIVIC Bangalore spoke about out of school children and mentioned that 'Every child who is out of school is a child labour' . She also discussed about 'curative' approach of 'rehabilitation' rather than a 'preventive' approach of 'retention' of the child, specific needs and concerns around which innovation is centered, problems such as no preventive protocol Lacunae in Karnataka, no mechanism for ensuring compulsion, no mechanism to assist parents of vulnerable children, no accountabilities of state etc were discussed in detail. She also explained the innovativeness of the intervention strategy and potential for replications and scalability. Challenges relating to



cultural hang that lower castes should not be educated, lack of clear understanding of the term “Free and Compulsory Education”, prioritizing rights of parents rather than what is in the best interest of the child were also discussed. Mr. William Christopher discussed about five ‘Mantras’: Governance, Convergence, Transparency, Accountability and Sharing of Information. He laid emphasis on difference between Child Labor and bonded labor, explained jurisdictional and priority issues and highlighted the need for convergence at all departments and sectors to address the issue of child labour. He explained that Identification, rescue, rehabilitation, repatriation and prosecution is a cycle that needs to be followed while handling issue of child labor. He also shared IJM’s best practice of ‘after care’.

Panel Session Two : 'Child Marriage'

The Subject for the second panel was 'Child Marriage' and the Moderator for this panel was Mr. Mariswamy, Member, KSCPCR. The panelists included Ms. Nalini Shekar, Hasiru Dala, Ms. Edwina Pereira, INSA and Ms. Pankaja, KIDS, Dharwad. Ms. Nalini Shekar

introduced Hasiru Dala which strives to eradicate child marriage, key strategies adopted to address the issues were discussed including organizing, intervention and planning for way ahead through networks. Case study of 3 girls below the age of 18 who were rescued from being married and provided vocational training for tailoring and driving were also discussed along with the challenges like unsafe housing,



traditional practices etc. Ms. Edwina Pereira introduced INSA – India and elucidated the four pillar approach to child marriage: Capacity building, enhancing child participation and education, child protection systems development and Partnerships and legal support. Ms. Panjaka shed light on the issue with concepts of family honor, marriage alliances, general views around marriage being influenced by dowry, poverty, culture, religion etc. Challenges such as myths, negligence, lack of convergence with department and NGOs, lack of village level informants etc were also discussed .

Panel Session Three and Four : Children subjected to sexual exploitation' and 'children impacted by disasters':

Children subjected to sexual exploitation' and 'children impacted by disasters' were the subjects for the third and fourth Panel. The Moderator for both the panels was Ms. Joyathri Equations and the panelists included Mr. Stanley, Odanadi, Mysore, Ms Hemalatha, Inspector Mr. Nagamani, SI-SJPU and Mr. Amit Singh. Mr. Stanley spoke about Key strategies adopted to address the issue with a case study of 17 year old Sandeep, 14 year old Prashanth whose needs were assessed and addressed by effective interventions. Ms. Hemalatha explained about Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU) in



Karnataka and the specialized child-friendly services to children in need of care and protection as well as those alleged to be in conflict with the law. Mr. Nagamani discussed about child sexual exploitation in tourism, especially domestic tourism. The issues of migrant children were also discussed and recommendations for having a comprehensive system for victims of sexual exploitation were made. The moderator, Ms. Joyathri asked for remarks and comments from the participants towards the end of the session and finally the programme concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by Ms. Brinda Adige.