

# Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children



Christian Conference of Asia

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**Report of the Asia Regional Consultation  
on  
Upholding the Dignity  
and  
Rights of Children**

16 - 20 September, 2018



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Published in February 2019

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*Printed in Thailand by* Santipab Pack-Print Co., Ltd.

## CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	5
1. Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children <i>Mathews George Chunakara</i>	6
2 Children in a Digitalized World: Impact and Challenges <i>Ali Aulia Ramly</i>	31
3 Poverty and Child Labour in Asia <i>Rohan P. Gideon</i>	41
4 Violence against Children in Asia <i>Eule Rico Bonganay</i>	55
5 Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children <i>Ahmad Sofian</i>	65
6 Children in Conflict Areas: <i>Budi Soehardi</i>	70
7 Early Childhood and Upholding Dignity <i>Henderina Corry</i>	73
8 Child Rights Implementation: Challenges of Member States <i>Yuyum Fhahni Paryani</i>	75
9 Upholding the Dignity of Children: Biblical Theological Perspectives <i>Rosiana Indah Purnomo</i>	83
10 Justice for Children of God <i>Ali'itasi Aoina Salosa</i>	87
<i>Appendices</i>	
Reports from Workshops	90
Communiqué	97

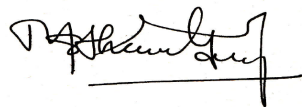


## *Foreword*

We live in a world where the dignity of children is forgotten, negated or violated in various ways every day. Children are increasingly become victims of poverty, violence, war, trafficking, forced displacement and terrorism. In Asia, a large number of children are forced to leave their homes at an early stage; they are then forced to serve as child labourers, sex-workers, drug traffickers and child soldiers. The society forgets the fact that every child's life is precious, unique and meaningful, and that every child has a right to live in dignity and in a safe environment. Despite technological advancements in the present digitalised and globalised world, millions of children all over the world are being abused and exploited in tragic ways on an unprecedented scale. In this era of increased connectivity at all levels and where digitalisation is the paramount feature of the day, the children of today face innumerable challenges. On the one hand, a vast majority of children live in poverty without enjoying any privilege or access to basic necessities of life, while on the other hand are the children who are privileged to enjoy affluence in life but get addicted to modern technology. In this situation, the world requires new thinking and approaches, heightened global awareness and an inspired leadership to face the challenges and uphold the dignity and protect the rights of children.

The Christian Conference of Asia organised a consultation on Upholding the dignity and Rights of Children; which was held in Jakarta, Indonesia with the assistance as Cooperation of GPIB. The papers' presented at the consultation and other relevant documents discussed at this consultation and included in this report.

It is hoped that this project will be beneficial for Asian churches as they move forward and undertake the tasks of preparing for programme.



Mathews George Chunakara  
*General Secretary, CCA*

# Upholding the Dignity and Rights of Children

- Mathews George Chunakara

Human dignity is an alienable and inherent right recognized as a foundational value of human society. Respect for human dignity is accepted as a norm and an essential component to achieve justice in every society. Human dignity captures the notion that every human being is uniquely valuable and therefore ought to be accorded the highest respect and care. This principle has a history since time immemorial especially embodied in religious teachings and philosophical thinking. The international human rights law is explicitly grounded on the assumption that people do have equal basic rights because they are derived from the dignity which is inherent in every human being. Human dignity is integral to public law, private law, criminal law, and administrative law in areas ranging from access to food, water, shelter and education, a sound environment to procedural rights of political participation and access to justice. Constitutions of countries also explicitly protect human dignity and the rights of every individual which give people around the world increasingly a sense of feeling of their worth and value, in other words, their own dignity. In the case of children too, every child has a right to dignity and safety. Each child has the right to health, education and protection, and every society has a role in providing and expanding opportunities in life for children. Yet, around the world, millions of children are denied a just and fair chance to enjoy their childhood and access adequate facilities to blossom into their lives for no reason other than the country, gender or circumstances into which they are born.

In 1944, 15 year old Anne M. Frank who died in a Nazi concentration camp shortly before her death wrote: “I simply

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can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the suffering of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty, too, will end..." The situation today is not at all different from that of almost 75 years ago. What the world witnesses today is symmetrical of what was happening more than seven decades ago when Anne Frank wrote these lines. A study of UNICEF reveals the fact that "for children, the world is now a more violent and volatile place than at any time since the Second World War". Children in many parts of the world face inhuman and degrading situations day by day. The happenings in day to day life indicate the reality that survival of the child in our world today is becoming extremely difficult for a large number of children.

The reports that are being published and televised on stories related to the violation of the rights of children around the world illustrate the magnitude of this problem. The scourges of civil war and armed insurgencies continue to wreak havoc on the world's children. Of the approximately 68.5 million people around the world who have been forced from home and became refugees or internally displaced, over half of them are under the age of 18.

Growing chasms between rich and poor lead to forced child labour, increased trafficking and sexual exploitation. In the decade since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, more than 2 million children have been killed and more than 6 million children have been injured or disabled in armed conflicts. Tens of thousands of children have been maimed by landmines and thousands have suffered in the upsurge of conflicts fuelled by a seemingly insatiable hunger for land and the natural bounties of gems and oil. The proliferation of light, inexpensive weapons has meant more child soldiers fighting adult wars. Countless others have been recruited as sex slaves or porters. Despite the economic development that is taking place in the world and its rich resources, nearly 600 million children live in absolute poverty in families that earn less than a dollar a day and one quarter of these children are chronically malnourished. Despite the existence



of vaccines and other measures that routinely protect children in the industrialized world against child-killer diseases, about 10 million children still die each year from diseases that could have been prevented. Despite a near-universal consensus on the life-affirming importance of education, about 263 million children and youth are out of school, according to a 2017 data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). This is equivalent to a quarter of the population of Europe. The total includes 61 million children of primary school age, 60 million of lower secondary school age, and includes the first ever estimate of those of upper secondary school age at 142 million.

### **The Impact of Globalisation and Economic Liberalisation on Children**

When the question, “will our children pay the price for globalization”, is being raised by a large number of people in the developing countries and countries that have shifted to market economy, the answer they begin to say is ‘yes’. They talk now of how increasing costs of basic food, cuts in subsidies for food, health care and education, and loss of jobs force their children to work as additional bread winners. Globalisation and Foreign Direct Investments increased consumer choice, but the governments of the South were forced to introduce subsidy cuts. Experiences across the world show that children are among the most vulnerable when local economies are opened up to global market forces without investing in and providing adequate safeguards for the poor. The negative impact of this process of globalization is very much visible where basic needs such as water, health care and education facilities are commercialized. Incidences of parents withdrawing children from schools are reported from several developing countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, etc., as a result of increasing costs of education. The privatization of education from nursery schools to higher education level denies opportunities for children coming from the lower income group. Since several Asian countries introduced economic, industrial and trade liberalisation policies in early 1990s, the governments spent a lower proportion of national income on social sectors than in the 1980s. Most farmers in Asian countries suffered due to the higher costs of fertilisers, pesticides and seeds in the past two decades. Farmers get lesser prices for their agricultural produce compared to the prices of a

decade ago. At the same time, food grain prices have shot up affecting the capacity to purchase basic food items in the market. This adds hunger and malnutrition, and children are the most affected in society.

Despite a tremendous growth in economic activity and globalisation of capital and trade, penetration of transnational corporations into every corner of the world, the increase of productivity, and development of technology, the world's poor have not benefited and children of these poor sectors bear the brunt of this much popularised developmental growth today. It has been proved that the new opportunities for economic growth and employment, through globalisation of trade and investment and liberalization of markets, do not necessarily benefit children. Labour markets have become more deregulated. The countries that are trying to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) may try to find competitive benefits over rival investment locations by offering the lowest possible cost of production. The economic crisis and its impact have affected children in many ways.

The shift from casual jobs to contract labour also contributes to worsening the situation of children as parents get less income. Lack of regular employment opportunities for adults forces them to find a way to survive and in the end, the education of their children suffers to make up for the gap in falling income. The phenomenon of the mushrooming of private schools and commercialisation of education has destroyed the public education systems of governments in many developing countries. As unemployed parents cannot pay for the education of their children, many children are out on the streets in search of jobs in several Asian cities. All these factors are clear examples for the neglect and vulnerability children of developing countries face in the midst of technological advancement or infrastructural developments taking place in big cities.

### **Poverty Leads to Child Labour**

Children are among the primary victims of growing poverty, often having no choice but to work to help keep their families alive. World Bank studies have shown that there is a close correla-

tion between Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and the incidence of child labour. Less industrialized countries tend to have a higher demand for agricultural and less skilled workers than industrialized countries, and this demand may be readily met by the use of child labourers. The relationship between poverty and child labour is not a simple one. Issues such as income distribution, fertility, education, malnutrition, the status of women, together with the structure and framework of the economy can all affect the likely incidence of child labour. However, whilst the economic status of a country may create a climate that encourages child labour, basic human need provides the catalyst that causes families to send their children to work. According to the World Bank, more than 1.3 billion people currently live on less than U.S \$1 per day - the internationally defined poverty line. It is estimated that children contribute 20 to 25 per cent of the income of the families within this group. Given that in these families most of the income of the family is spent on basics such as food and shelter, it can be seen here that the child's contribution is a necessity, not a luxury.

In poor countries, child workers are visible in and around cities, towns and in the countryside in the developing countries engaged in all kinds of work: in brickyards, rubber plantations, paddy fields, fishing boats, garment factories, motor workshops, service stations, restaurants , etc.. They also work as domestic helpers in rich people's houses. It is common to see children rushing behind garbage trucks every morning on the outskirts of many cities and towns, trying to collect anything which can be recycled among the piles of rotten garbage. Hundreds of children wander the streets, offering to polish shoes, selling newspapers, peanuts or fruits, while others beg for money from tourists or foreign aid workers. All of these children, whether they work or beg, are from poor families and they do so to help support their impoverished families. It is also an increasing phenomenon in poor countries that a large number of families are managed by single mothers and for the children of these women to be obliged to work at a very early age.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 145 million of the world's

children aged 6 to 11 years are not in school. In many countries, poor families cannot afford to pay for their children's education. Many children live in communities where there are no schools and consequently they work. Children who do not complete their primary education are likely to remain illiterate and never acquire the knowledge required to obtain skilled employments. Thus, it appears that child labour is a self-perpetuating process. It is important to recognize that the problem of child labour cannot be solved without efforts to tackle poverty itself.

International trade and technological changes have reduced the cost of unskilled labour, increasing the gap between high and low incomes. The trend is to recruit a cheap labour force and so, an increasing number of child labourers are being recruited. With the reduction in wages of a large number of workers, millions of children are forced into the labour market. In this era of economic globalisation, liberalization of trade and investment policies, a multitude of companies engaged in export sector industries have opened up their factories in developing countries. About 5 per cent of the world's child labour force is thought to be engaged in export sector industries. This has prompted discussion in the context of international trade negotiations, concerning the introduction of a social clause to international trade agreements. Such a clause would result in the imposition of penalties on countries or companies failing to observe core labour standards, such as ILO Convention 138. The arguments for and against attempts to eradicate child labour through compulsory means might lead to unintended consequences.

Child labour has many consequences, one of them being that the intellectual development of the child is affected. Although many children combine their work and schooling, most of them do not go to school at all. Their physical and psychological development and their moral well-being are seriously compromised when they start working at a tender age and are put at risk by the poor safety and health conditions in which they work. Child workers are also more vulnerable to extreme forms of violence and abuse. In terms of wages, children are paid only a pittance, particularly in the case of small-scale industries, making it very economical. Children subjected to the most intolerable forms of child labour generally come from population groups that are not just

economically vulnerable, but also culturally and socially disadvantaged. According to UNICEF, children are also vulnerable because of traditional or societal attitudes that maintain that it is somehow acceptable for the children of the poor and the disadvantaged, ethnic minorities, or different castes to undertake hazardous and exploitative work.

According to recent surveys carried out and the statistics available to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) the number of working children worldwide, aged between 5 and 14 years, is 250 million, of which at least 120 million are working full time and doing work that is hazardous and exploitative. In addition, UNICEF suggests that there are a further 150 million children who undertake regular but unpaid work such as helping with domestic activities. This suggests that worldwide, as many as 400 million children may be involved in some form of regular work or labour. Asia has the largest number of child workers, accounting for about 61 per cent of child workers in the world. Around 40 per cent of all African children, between the ages of 5 to 14 years, are thought to be engaged in some form of work. This constitutes 32 per cent of the total workforce of children in Africa, and 7 per cent in Latin America. ILO reported that child labour still exists in industrialized countries. In southern European countries, a large number of children are found in paid employment, especially in activities of a seasonal nature, street trades, small workshops or domestic work. The problem has increased in central and eastern European countries as a result of the difficulties faced by large sectors of the population following transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. Another example given is the United States in which the number of children working aged between 12 years to 17 years is estimated to be 5.5 million or 27 percent of children in this age group; millions of them are working in harmful and dangerous conditions.

### **Increasing Number of Children on Streets**

According to UN sources there are up to 150 million street children in the world today. Chased from home by violence, drug and alcohol abuse, the death of a parent, family breakdown, war, natural disaster or simply socio-economic collapse, many destitute

children are forced to make out a living on the streets through scavenging, begging, hawking in the slums and polluted cities of the developing world.

Various categories of street children exist. There are those who work on the streets as their only means of getting money, those who take refuge on the streets during the day but return to some form of family at night and those who permanently live on the street without a family network. All are at risk from abuse, exploitation or police violence, but the most vulnerable are those who actually sleep and live on the streets, hiding under bridges, in gutters, in railway stations and so on. While they may have small jobs such as shoe-shiners market-sellers to pull through, many also end up dying on the pavement, becoming victims of drugs, gang rivalry and disease. Without some form of basic education and economic training, the future is bleak for these street children and their life expectancy terrifyingly low.

Asia as a region has the largest number of street children. India has the largest population of street children in the world – 18 million children work and live on the streets of urban India. Street children are the casualties of economic growth, war, poverty, loss of traditional values, domestic violence, physical and mental abuse. Every street child has a reason for being on the street. Majority of the street children are in such a situation because they have no other place to go to or survive. In many countries, street children are named after their main survival activities. For example, street vendors, Lusaka, street gangs, juvenile prostitutes, separated children, etc.

A street child may be a child of the street, or a child on the street or part of a street family. A child of the street has no home but the streets, as the family may have abandoned him/her or may have no surviving family members left. Such a child has to struggle for survival and might move from friend to friend or live in shelters such as abandoned buildings. A child on the street may be visiting his or her family regularly. The child might even return every night to sleep at home, but spends most days and some nights on the street due to poverty, starvation, sexual or physical abuse at home. Some children live on the sidewalks of cities or

towns with the rest of the family members. They are forced to live on the streets due to poverty, displacements, communal riots or conflicts. They move from one place to another when necessary. The children in these street families work on the streets with other members of their families.

Various definitions have been framed during these years to identify street children and their problems: children who work on the streets during the day but who maintain links with the family and who usually return to their homes in the evening; children who have some contact with their families and live permanently on the street; children who have lost contacts with the families and live permanently on the street; children who live on the street with their family or parents; children who have run away from homes because of poverty or cruel treatment and live on the street.

Whatever may be the definitions and categories, street children are poverty stricken and their needs and problems are a result of wanting to meet basic needs for survival. The reasons for the street children phenomenon are varied and the direct causes are many. Any of the processes of children becoming separated from family may result in children living and working on the street at some point. Street children are easy targets for exploitation. They are young, small, poor, and ignorant of their rights and often have no family members to come to their defence.

The street children who spend their childhood on the streets and live in vulnerable situations get little or no sympathy. They sleep in dark corners of cities, on the verandas of shops, or on railway platforms. They tend to find solace in darkness and that eventually leads them to the darker realities in life. They survive by begging or doing casual work. We see them on the roads during traffic blocks as they approach us begging, or in front of restaurants and hotels as they offer to polish people's shoes. Poverty, negligence, and broken families lead them to the city streets. The longer the children have been away from home or homeless, the more difficult it is to help them. They get used to the unregulated freedom and find it difficult to readjust to normal life. Many of these street children become alcoholic or drug addicts at a very early age. The freedom they enjoy and the company and influence

of other children who have already started their street lives cause the new children to follow the same path. They do not receive anybody's love and care in life. A large number of them will become a liability and a curse to the society, wherever they live. These children living on the streets of cities bring more problems to an increasingly violent society. Bññdicte Manier, a French journalist, uncovered a story of Cambodian street children which illustrated how in the cities, the children's begging hid a tragic reality: the youngest are taken under the wing of "big brothers", gang leaders around twenty years old, who terrorise them. The little beggars who don't bring back enough money in the evening are punished with cigarette burns or knife cuts. These delinquents also push the children to "sniff" glue, or even take them to Thailand where they oblige them to beg in the tourist areas.

Another story of street children showcases the facts of glue intoxication among street children. Most of them have a small plastic bag filled with glue in their pockets. It is placed over the nose and mouth, they breathe in and the rest follows by itself. Their feeling of hunger, along with their other worries, disappears. Intoxicated, they can sleep even if the ground is hard and the night is cold. Other drugs such as heroin and cocaine are too expensive and difficult to procure and therefore, glue is the most widespread stimulant among street children.

The process of globalisation and economic liberalisation created a situation forcing more children to be on the street. Mongolia is an example for this trend. Ever since Mongolia embarked on a free market economy almost a decade ago and then formally renounced socialism in 1992, social workers say that the number of children living on the streets has been rising. Under the socialist system, there had been a safety net that had taken care of the people's education and medical needs, and had provided jobs. However, government subsidies are no longer available - a change that has had a heavy toll on the weaker sections in society and the increasing number of street children is the by-product of this phenomenon. Economic changes have resulted in closure of many industries, high levels of unemployment, and families moving in a downward spiral towards homelessness. The number of children who have become separated from parents or stay with families and



work on the streets is growing. Mongolia's harsh winters force these children to take shelter in Ulaanbaatar's underground heating system.

The problem of street children continues to escalate in cities of the developing countries which have become magnets for poor families. In such situations, street children are the mute testimony of economic recession, increasing poverty, the break-up of traditional patterns of social and economic life, family disruption, and the inability or unwillingness of the government to respond to the well being of the people. The lives of children in any society are indicators of the strength and weakness of those societies. If the youngest and most vulnerable are left to fend for themselves, a country is neglecting its own future. Comprehensive early childhood care is key to creating a world characterized by hope and change rather than deprivation and despair.

### **Children of Refugees, Migrants and Stateless People**

The UNICEF estimated last year that 31 million children live outside their country of birth, including 11 million child refugees and asylum-seekers. Nearly one in three children living outside their country of birth is a refugee; for adults, the proportion under UNHCR's mandate is less than 1 in 20. In 2015, just two countries – the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan – accounted for nearly half of all child refugees under UNHCR's mandate; about three-quarters of all child refugees under UNHCR's mandate came from only 10 countries. Today, nearly 1 in every 200 children in the world is a child refugee. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of child refugees under the UNHCR's mandate more than doubled. During the same period, the total number of all child migrants rose by 21 per cent. Approximately 10 million child refugees are hosted across the world, primarily within the regions where they were born. Girls and boys are equally represented among registered refugees, although children's risk of specific protection violations – such as recruitment by armed forces and armed groups, or sexual and gender-based violence – may differ between girls and boys. Overall, the refugee population is much younger than the migrant population. While a clear majority of the world's migrants are adults, children now comprise half of all refugees. The 10 countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees are

all in Asia and Africa, with Turkey hosting by far the largest total number of refugees under UNHCR's mandate. Although complete age-disaggregated data are not available for refugees in Turkey, its substantial share of total refugees makes Turkey likely the host of the largest number of child refugees in the world.

More than 40 million Asian migrants have found new homes outside the continent. Because of Asia's large overall population, its child migration numbers point in two seemingly contradictory directions: it is home to the largest total number of child migrants in the world, but its children migrate at one of the lowest rates of all major regions. There are a total of 12 million child migrants living in Asia, 16 percent of all migrants in the region. While these 12 million children make up 39 per cent of the world's child migrants, this proportion is notably below Asia's 56 per cent share of the global child population.

Conflicts in many Asian countries, high susceptibility to natural hazards and a large population all contribute to the huge toll of internal displacement within Asia. 19.2 million people have been internally displaced by violence across Asia, a staggering 47 per cent of the global total for similar internal displacements. While the number of people internally displaced by natural disasters varies significantly by year, the general trend of disproportionate impact in Asia does not. In 2015, East Asia, the Pacific and Southern Asia had 85 per cent of all disaster-related internal displacements. Given the global average of more than 25 million disaster-related internal displacements per year, Asian children will continue to confront internal displacement and its attendant dangers each year.

According to UNHCR statistics 40% of the identified stateless population of the world live in Asia and the Pacific. This figure does not include the 4 million people who were excluded from the lists of the final draft of the National Register of Citizens for Assam. The list has 28.9 million people but leaves out four million who could not produce valid documents and they would not be included now as part of the National Registration of Certificate in the Assam State of India. Hundreds of thousands fled to India from Bangladesh during Bangladesh's war of independence from

Pakistan, which began on March 26, 1971, and ended on December 16. Most of them settled in Assam, which shares a long border with Bangladesh. The 4 million not included in the NRC list would become stateless soon and a vast number of them are children, even those who were born in recent years to parents of those who were settled in Assam from Bangladesh.

An estimated 135 million children under five years old across Asia and the Pacific have not had their births registered. Not being registered at birth is not synonymous to being stateless, however such registration is often a prerequisite in establishing a child's legal identity. It usually includes key information, such as the identity of the child's parents and the date and place of birth which establish if the child has a right to nationality under the law of the State where he or she is born or under the law of other States to which the child has a relevant link. Particularly in the context of migration and displacement, the lack of documentation can undermine their nationality. Imagine a situation where a child is growing without any citizenship rights and is forced to survive without any aid when children of the same age live with necessary support from the government and the society.

### **Sale and Trafficking of Children**

The sale of children has been defined as “the transfer of parental authority over and/or physical custody of a child to another, on a more or less permanent basis, in exchange for financial or other reward or consideration”. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children adopted by the General Assembly resolution defines “Sale of children means any act or transaction, whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons, to another for remuneration or any other consideration” (article 2). The selling of children is a pernicious practice and a direct affront to the integrity and dignity of the child as a human being, thus reduced to become an article of trade or commerce. Children are being sold in many parts of the world. These sales of children are for different kinds of exploitation, like trafficking for sexual exploitation and slavery, for pornography, for forced labour, for war, for organ transplantation, etc.

Trafficking of children for slavery and labour is prevalent in different forms. A form of child slavery that exists in several countries is through the child bonded labour practice. In India, this practice still exists in certain states. Children work to pay off debts or other obligations incurred by their family even before the child was born. There are also other less formal types of child slavery and forced labour by which rural children are lured to the city with the false promise of work.

The International Labour Conference held in June 1999, adopted a new Convention and accompanying Recommendation concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The new Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) applies to all persons under the age of 18, corresponding to the definition of the term child in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The scope of this ILO Convention is not limited to economic exploitation, although the title refers to child labour, but this convention covers, among other things: all forms of slavery and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

The lack of legal mechanisms or will for implementing the laws against the culprits engaged in heinous actions against children leads to the creation of more child victims. International co-operation needs to be strengthened by multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements for the prevention, detention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for acts involving the sale of children.

The earthquake that hit Nepal in 2015 has left numerous children orphaned or separated from their relatives. There is a very high risk that these children in vulnerable situations will be targeted by human traffickers. In Haiti, following the 2010 earthquake more than 2,500 irregular voyages by children were recorded at border crossings, of which 460 were cases of trafficking.

### **Sexual Exploitation of Children**

Technological advancements have opened up new avenues for intensifying the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children, has become a serious problem ever since the new era of digitalisation was launched. Sexual exploitation of children is on the increase globally and is a profitable industry, said to be netting an estimated five billion dollars annually. Several Asian countries have been experiencing a wave of sex tourism since the economic reforms and globalisation of trade were introduced in Asian countries as it attracts more tourists and provides foreign exchange. The Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on Child Prostitution observed several times in the past years that “any effort addressing child prostitution will not be complete without tackling the issue of sex tourism”. More specialised clientele of sex tourism are the pedophiles who cause damage to a great number of children. Pedophilia is generally defined as abnormal attraction to young children. Pedophiles are big consumers of both child prostitution and child pornography. Children fall victim to exploitation from within and without, that is both from their own country people as the consumers or as the middle persons for others, including foreigners. Recent reports highlighted the growing problem of elaborate child exploitation rings which operate with impunity in Asia. Thousands of pedophiles continue to prey on vulnerable and impoverished youngsters in Asian countries. Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia offer a safe haven to pedophiles and their activities are getting harder to detect. East Asia is facing new challenges of child exploitation despite an economic boom. The increasing breakdown of the family system in South Korea and Japan acts as a push factor to drive children from their homes and into sexual exploitation. According to UNICEF, more than a million children in Southeast Asia are subject to sexual exploitation, in a problem that has worsened with the onset of the HIV-AIDS epidemic. Several Western nations have adopted laws making it possible to prosecute offenders who commit sex crimes abroad, but lack of evidences often allow culprits to escape. Foreign tourists and expatriates have contributed to the growth of the child sex trade in Asia.

### **Children in Armed Conflicts**

The changing nature of armed conflict, characterized by rising intra-state conflict, loosely organized fighting groups and a

growing percentage of civilian casualties, has had a disproportionate impact on the lives of children. It destroys their families and communities and undermines their growth and development. On any given day, more than 20 ethnic or armed conflicts are being fought around the world, mostly in poor countries. In the past decade alone two million children were slaughtered, six million were seriously injured or permanently disabled and 12 million were left homeless. It is estimated that between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of people who die or are injured in conflicts are civilians, mostly children and their mothers. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, over a million children were orphaned or separated from their families because of armed conflict. Surveys conducted by governmental and non-governmental organizations had shown that more than half the children of Sri Lanka during the civil war period became serious victims of war; due to malnutrition or disabilities, they dropped out of school or were living on the streets. Even after a decade of ending the civil war, children in the former war zones experience traumatic experiences. The number of children directly oppressed by the war in the North and East of the country was about 500,000. About 187 schools located in the Northern and Eastern provinces in Sri Lanka were closed down during the civil war. Most of the school buildings were used as refugee camps. Furthermore, an additional 5 to 60 per cent of the school children in the Northern and Eastern provinces were recruited by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for their armed forces. When the war situation in Sri Lanka continued for about 25 years, it created a situation whereby the majority of the children in the country were starving.

UNICEF recognises that children are increasingly the first to suffer in a growing number of conflicts, most often within States, between political, ethnic or religious factions and that the proportion of civilian conflict victims has leaped in recent decades from 5 per cent to over 90 per cent. At least half of them were children. In the last decade, around 2 million children have died as a result of war, and around 6 million have been left physically disabled. Children are the first to feel the effects of war - poverty, malnutrition and trauma.

The use of children in warfare is increasing in many conflict affected countries although the use of children by various rebel groups has come under severe criticism. The suffering of children in the context of armed conflict bears many faces. Studies have found that in conflict-ridden regions across the world in 2017, a high number of children had been killed, used as human shields and recruited to fight. Children are being killed and maimed in as many as 50 countries around the world where war continues to rage. More than 30 million children are displaced by wars within and outside their countries. Many have been left orphans, thousands raped, sexually abused or left traumatized. About 300,000 children below the age of 18 bear arms as child soldiers in over 30 countries. Many are recruited, others abducted. Some join these groups to survive and others out of fear. They do not have opportunities to build up their lives or they risk becoming a lost generation. Many children living in camps for refugees and internally displaced people are trapped in the highly militarized environments, moving from there to these camps. It must be noted that the reasons that force children's participation in armed conflict are often the very causes of the conflict themselves.

### **Digitalised World: Impact on Children**

Technology's exponential advancement and integration into our everyday lives is not only changing what we do and how we do it, but also who we are. Like globalization and urbanization, 'digitalization' has already changed the world. The rapid proliferation of information and communications technology is an unstoppable force, touching virtually every sphere of modern life, from economies to societies to cultures, and shaping everyday life. Digital technologies have profoundly changed childhood and adolescence. The internet and the means to access it, such as tablets and smartphones, along with social media platforms and messaging apps, have become integral to the lives of youth around the world. They have transformed their education and learning, the way they make and maintain friendships, how they spend their leisure time, and their engagement with wider society. Much of the impact of these changes has been very positive. However, we are also faced the dark side of this new-found world, a world which is enabling a host of social ills that are harming children, the most vulnerable members of society.

While undoubtedly the Internet creates numerous benefits and opportunities in terms of social inclusion and educational attainment, the fact remains that content that is increasingly dehumanizing is available literally at children's fingertips. The proliferation of social media means insidious acts, such as cyber bullying, and harassment, are becoming commonplace. Specifically, the range and scope of child sexual abuse and exploitation online are shocking. Vast numbers of sexual abuse images of children and youth are available online. The detrimental impact of pornography on the malleable minds of children is another significant harm. Several studies show that problems affecting children in a digitalised world is a crisis that cannot be solved by one nation or one company or one faith acting alone; it is a global problem that requires global solutions. It requires that we build awareness, and that we mobilize action from every government, every faith, every company and every institution.

Children are often the early adopters of emerging services and technologies and therefore the first to spot its contradictions and challenges, yet they are rarely asked their opinion and are very often the last to be heard. The digital environment looks quite different when we look at it from the point of view of a child's ability to meet his or her development goals. Children and adolescents make up over a quarter of the more than 3.2 billion Internet users worldwide. This generation of over 800 million young users is in danger of becoming victims of sextortion, a form of sexual exploitation that employs non-physical forms of coercion to extort sexual favours from the victim, and a form of blackmail in which sexual information or images are used to extort sexual favours from the victim; sexting, an activity of sending text messages that are about sex or intended to sexually excite someone; cyber bullying and harassment.

Sale and sexual exploitation of children in a digitalised world are more alarming. Along with the substantial opportunities the digital age brings comes a diverse range of risks and harms. Digital technologies have increased the scale of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Child sex offenders have increased access to children through unprotected social media profiles and online gaming forums. Technological advances have allowed individual offenders



and trafficking rings to evade detection through encrypted platforms and the creation of false identities, and have enabled them to pursue multiple victims at the same time.

Several UN Special Rapporteurs studied the impact of information and communication technologies on children in their thematic studies and the fast evolving nature of the Internet has necessitated constant updates. They identified new types of abuse committed through the Internet, such as grooming or the production of child erotica, and technological advances facilitating illicit activities, such as purchases through virtual currencies, each time.

The travel and tourism industry has been making rapid progress due to the advantages of digitalised information sharing and technological advancement. At the same time, instances of sexual exploitation of children through travel and tourism are increasing. Many instances are reported in 62 out of the 188 countries covered by The Protection Project's Trafficking in Persons Report of 2014, with offenders originating from 21 countries and travelling to 30 countries.

The impact of digitalised world is more evident now in the area of eSports; "eSports" is simply the short name for electronic sports, which have become extremely popular over the past few years. Several companies all over the world now make lot of money through eSports and children are the worst victims. Just like football players play football together, eSports players play computer games against other children and adults who enjoy getting competitive with their computer gaming. eSports have recently been under the spotlight in relation to allegations of child abuse. There are a number of reasons why eSports may present something of a risk area in terms of child protection. A significant proportion of eSports participants and the eSports audience are children and young persons, especially those under the age of 18. Instances reported show that there are foreseeable risks to children less than 18 years as it leads to sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, bullying, and other behaviour that may be harmful to children. In many situations, there is no statutory restriction to enabling underage children to view age restricted videogames online.

We embrace the vision of an internet accessible by all people. However, we believe the constitution of this vision must recognize the unwavering value of protecting all children. We must ensure that all children have safe access to the internet to enhance their education, communications and connections. Technology companies and government have shown leadership in this fight and must continue to innovate to better protect children. We must also awaken families, neighbours, communities around the world and children themselves to the reality of the internet's impact upon children. We already have potent global platforms in place and important global leaders making significant progress in fulfilling these aims. The United Nations is leading a global effort to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to eradicate violence against children by 2030, particularly through the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

### **Recognition of the Dignity and Protection of the Rights of Children**

Recognition of children and respecting their dignity means “addressing every child with respect; never referring to or about as if they are their disability, nor as if they are one of their needs, nor as if they are a piece of equipment involving the children in conversation; never talking about children as if they were not there; respecting every child's privacy at all times and in all places; treating all information about children carefully, keeping it safe and sharing it only with those people who need to know; never discussing personal information about one child in the presence of another child, involving children in decisions that affect them: actively encouraging children to express their views and where these cannot be taken into account, then explaining why giving opportunities for the children to make their own choices”.

The catastrophe caused by the World Wars and their callous impact on innocent people, especially the most susceptible sectors in society, children and women, led to a situation which stirred the international community to undertake legal measures concerning protection of the rights of children. In 1924, the League of Nations formulated and distributed a Declaration of the Rights of the Child with the aim of further developing it later with more legally binding standards. However, this did not materialise

as the League of Nations collapsed and the Second World War broke out. The UDHR proclaimed by the new UNO in 1948 laid down the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It stated that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State (article 16.3). Article 25.2 stated “Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection”. These clauses in the declaration became an impetus for advancing the cause of the rights of the child.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) stipulated in Article 24 stated that:

1. Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.
2. Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name.
3. Every child has the right to acquire a nationality.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Culture Rights article 10.3 stated:

Special Measure of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young person should be protected from economic and social exploitation...

Concerned by the grave and inhuman situation of children in many parts of the world, the UN General Assembly in 1959 proclaimed a Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which called upon parents, individuals, voluntary organizations, local authorities and national governments to recognize the rights of the child and strive for their observance by legislative and other measures

taken progressively, in accordance with the 10 principles outlined in the Declaration. These 10 principles cover rights that have to be protected including non-discrimination, special protection, nationality, social security, protection of health and health care, special treatment for the physically, mentally and socially handicapped, the duties and responsibilities of parents and governments, the opportunity for education, play and recreation; protection against negligence, cruelty, and exploitation and trafficking, inculcating a spirit of understanding, tolerance, peace and universal brotherhood.

The 1959 Declaration provided the momentum for initiating a new phase in developing an international instrument which would be binding upon the States signing and ratifying it, with appropriate measures and mechanisms for overseeing compliance. Thirty years later in 1989 the Convention on the rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly and opened for signature, ratification and accession and it entered into force on 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. This was the end of a process that had begun with the preparations for the 1979 International Year of Child.

Among all the international instruments existing now to protect and promote the rights of the child, the Convention of 1989, which has been ratified by 191 countries in the world, is considered to be the highest achievement. There are a number of other relevant instruments which have also been developed over the years, for the purpose of either implementing or complementing the 1989 Convention. These include the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and its corresponding Plan of Action for the 1990s approved by the World Summit of Heads of States and Governments held in new York on 30 September 1990; the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in July 1990, the first treaty to establish the human rights of the child across an entire region (progress has been very slow and it was not until November 1999 that it finally took force when it was ratified by sixteen African States); the European Charter of Rights of the Child, formulated by the European Parliament on 8 July 1992. In addition to the emergence of these instruments, the most import-

ant influence of the 1989 Convention has been its visible application in many of the states that have signed and ratified it. Two other international instruments adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution are the Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and the Child Pornography and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts, both adopted by the General Assembly resolutions on 25 May 2000. (A/RES/54/263 25 May 2000). The U.N Security Council formally affirmed, through Resolution 1261 (1999), that protection and security of war-affected children is a peace-and-security concern that belongs in its agenda. It has now established an open debate on this issue. The U.N Security Council held its third open debate on the question of children and armed conflict, the first global thematic issue it had discussed, on 26 July 2000. The Secretary General submitted a report on implementing the landmark Resolution 1261 on children and armed conflict, which has the potential to be a real step forward for children's rights, provided that its recommendations can be fully implemented. The Security Council reaffirmed in Resolution 1314 (2000) its readiness to include child protection in the mandates of all peacekeeping operations. A minimum age of eighteen years has also been established for all UN peacekeepers, and it has been agreed that all peacekeeping operations should include child rights advocates within their missions.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a guidepost to the development of child protection policy. Both comprehensive and conceptually coherent, the Convention provides a statement of international consensus that children are indeed persons, legally and morally, and that the state should ensure that they are treated with dignity. At least in spirit, the Convention demands substantial reform of most existing child protection systems. The first legally binding document to protect the rights of children, the Convention is a collectively agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations to protect children's rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. So far, 196 countries have ratified the U.N Convention and brought their legislation, policy and practice to reflect the universally recognised standards. However, the U.S.A has not yet ratified the Convention. The Convention

establishes general principles such as equality and non-discrimination, primary considerations for the best interests of the child, including his/her economic, social and cultural rights. States parties must ensure that all children within their jurisdiction enjoy their rights. No child should suffer discrimination. This applies to every child, irrespective of the child's or his parents or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status. The Convention recognised various types of rights and duties to protect and promote the rights of the child which are the highlights of the Convention.

The rights of the Child in abnormal or dangerous circumstances and the duties of States to protect children in such situations are covered in article 32 to 39, specifying the child's right to protection from economic exploitation and hazardous work; protection from illegal use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; protection from sexual abuse; protection from abduction, the sale or trafficking of children for any purpose; protection from torture and other cruel or inhuman treatment, or deprivation of liberty; the child's rights in situations of armed conflict.

### **God's Call to affirm Human Dignity of Children**

The desire for life in all its richness and fullness is perhaps the most powerful instinct in human beings. We share this with all forms of life. The profound concept of humanity is depicted in the story of creation in Genesis. The creation of humankind is placed as the very last act of God before resting. The human being thus represents the climax of the creation. The human creature, therefore, already occupies quite an elevated position in relation to the rest of creation. The Israelite concept of the human is further determined by their concept of God and also the concept of the human as being created in the image of God. (Gen.1: 1-27). The root of that deeply profound theological term- human dignity- is based on the fact that every human being is an image of God. The belief that every human being is created in the image of God is fundamental to the Christian faith and conviction. Jurgen Moltmann's contributions to the wider debate on human rights propose a Christian perspective on human dignity. Christian theology un-

derstands human dignity on the basis of biblical testimonies, the narratives of Israel and Jesus. These narratives describe human dignity which is based on God's claim to the creation. Human dignity is grounded in God's creativity, that is, God's power. God's faithfulness to creation is at the heart of human dignity, as is God's infinite readiness for suffering for the sake of the life of the creation. Christologically stated, the price God pays for God's right to all creatures is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Human dignity, then, is God's claim on human beings. It is not something created by human declarations. Human rights spring from human dignity and not vice versa. Human dignity, however, requires human rights for its embodiment, protection, and full flowering. Human rights are the concrete, indefeasible claim of human dignity. According to Moltmann, human rights are plural but human dignity exists only in the singular. Therefore, the dignity of human beings takes precedence over the many rights and duties which are bound up with being human. The dignity of the human being is not itself a human right but a source and ground for all human rights.

Every person, including every child, is created in the image of God and called by God to participate in the unfolding of creation. Children are of no less value than adults. While the children are entrusted to families for their care, they also have individual worth and dignity apart from other members of their families. Jesus moved a child from the edge to the centre to demonstrate the worth and significance of that child (Matthew 18: 1-5). He showed his concerns for them and acknowledged the importance of caring for them. Jesus loved children and often praised the greatness of children. He loved the sanctity of childhood, reconciling the nature of children, and their tendency to dream and hope for future endlessly. He was upholding the dignity of the child.

Dignity and fullness of life are God's gifts in life and children deserve it as equally as any other human being. God calls us to be partners in His mission to restore the lost dignity of all human beings, recognise their worth and importance, and affirm their fullness of life. As we are surrounded with millions of children who have lost their dignity and fullness of life, God calls us to be partners in His mission to restore the dignity and fullness of life to all his children.

# Children in a Digitalized World: Impact and Challenges

- Ali Aulia Ramly

UNICEF works to ensure that all children enjoy the rights guaranteed to them in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which has been ratified by every country in this region. We work with countries in East Asia & the Pacific to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children.

The coverage of Internet increases every year. Indeed, the rapid change in the field of information technology means that statistics have a short shelf life. At the beginning of 1998, less than 200 million people around the world were online. By the end of 2011, this figure had risen to 2.3 billion, and by the end of 2014 the number of Internet users globally was expected to have reached almost 3 billion. Of these, two thirds lived in the developing world, where the number of Internet users would have doubled in five years: from 974 million in 2009 to 1.9 billion in 2014. Despite this rapid growth, a significant digital divide persisted: Internet penetration in developing countries was still only 32% compared to a global average of 34%. Globally, 4 billion people did not use internet, and more than 90% of them lived in the developing world.

Region wise, 19% of Africa's population would be online by the end of 2014, up from 10% in 2010, but still trailing other regions. Europe had the highest Internet penetration worldwide, set to reach 75% by the end of 2014, followed by the Americas (65%), the Commonwealth of Independent States (56%), the Arab States (41%) and the Asia-Pacific region (32%). Globally, more men than women use the Internet: 41% of all men compared to 37% of all



women, or 483 million male Internet users compared to 475 million female users. This gender gap is most pronounced in the developing world, where 16% fewer women than men use the Internet. This discrepancy has important implications for human development.

The growth of Internet access is supported by increasing broadband and mobile phone penetration. By the end of 2014, the Asia-Pacific region had almost 1 billion mobile broadband subscriptions. Yet this region's penetration rate (23%) lags behind that of other regions, including the Arab States (25%) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (49%). It is estimated that mobile broadband subscriptions approached 70% of the world's total population by 2017. The emergence of broadband has been particularly significant in facilitating online child sexual abuse and exploitation because it enables the exchange of larger files, including files containing photos, video and audio.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are developing even more rapidly with profound effects upon societies around the world. They bring with them enormous benefits and opportunities, especially by facilitating access to the Internet. ICTs are creating new ways of communicating, learning, delivering services and doing business. At least 30 million children and adolescents in Indonesia were Internet users in 2014. The Study found that 69% used a personal computer to access the Internet. Around one-third -34%— used a laptop to do so, and a small minority — just 2% — connected through video games. More than half (52%) used their mobile phones to access Internet, falling to just under one- quarter (21%) for smartphones and just 4% for tablets.

The way in which children and young people engage through ICTs is significantly different to that of previous generations. Children, for example, tend to shift easily between real and virtual worlds, and they regard the online/offline distinction as ever less relevant. This being the case, if online opportunities are to be cultivated and online threats effectively addressed, adults must endeavor to grasp the complexities of children's online practices. The better we understand children's ICT usage patterns and online be-

havior, the better we will be able to promote the immense benefits of this technology while mitigating the risks associated with it.

For children and youth who are often particularly adept at harnessing the potential of these technologies, ICTs and the Internet represent an important opportunity for empowerment and engagement, offering new means of experiencing creative processes, communication, social interaction, entertainment and learning. Children are not simply passive recipients. In addition to promoting children's empowerment and participation, new technologies have proved increasingly useful for ensuring children's protection. They provide opportunities for young people to access information from institutions (including ombudspersons), seek advice from child help lines, report incidents of violence and ask for help when they feel at risk.

The Internet collapses physical distance and offers a vast, largely unregulated 'space' accessible to all by means of computers, laptops and mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. Openness and accessibility are fundamental aspects of the Internet – but therein also lies some of the greatest risks, in particular concerning the safety and well-being of children and young people. ICTs, and the unsupervised online access they facilitate, make children potentially vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation in particular ways that are often difficult to be detected and responded by parents, caregivers, teachers and others. Furthermore, technological advances have been so rapid that parents and caregivers often struggle to keep up with developments, especially in areas with low levels of digital literacy.

The Internet and ICTs have heightened the potential impact of existing forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, including:

- Children's exposure to disturbing or potentially harmful content on websites and online forums and blogs;
- Proliferation of child sexual abuse images and materials and with this, increased levels of harm for the victims and increased levels of profits for criminal enterprises;

- Development of virtual networks of individuals whose principal interest lies in child sexual abuse or child trafficking and other forms of exploitation;
- Inappropriate contact with children and ‘grooming’ by unknown adults; and
- Cyber bullying through email, online chat services, personal web pages, text messages and other forms of electronic content.

Additional issues are children’s exposure to unsolicited or age-inappropriate advertising and online pressure to purchase any services; overusing of ICTs; and Internet ‘addiction’, which often results in children’s involvement in age-inappropriate gaming with a high level of violence, racism or sexist contents. Online gaming communities can also be used by pedophiles who seek to make contact with children or by bullies as a platform for their abusive behavior. Other forms of online violence, abuse and exploitation that might be considered as new phenomena are made-to-order child sexual abuse materials; user-generated and self-generated contents including sexting; and broadcasting of child sex abuse, often by live streaming. Finally, evidence is beginning to emerge of children’s own involvement in cybercrime including hacking, online scams and consumption and dissemination of child sexual abuse materials.

Recently, the concern about the role of technology in generating and encouraging violence against children is emerging. As early as October 1996, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child dedicated a day of general discussion of ‘The child and the Media’. It was the reflections of both the role of the media in offering children the opportunity to express their views and on protection of children from information that might have a harmful impact on them, including material depicting “brutal violence and pornography”. In 2006, the United Nations Study on Violence against Children acknowledged “[...] the Internet and other developments of communication technologies [...] appear to be associated with an increased risk of sexual exploitation of children, as well as other forms of violence.” In 2008, ‘The Rio de Janeiro

Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents', the outcome document of World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, expressed concern at "the increase in certain forms of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, in particular through abuse of the Internet and new and developing technologies [...]."

The International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) indicated that online child sexual exploitation is likely to rise in coming years, as Internet adoption rates expand globally and demand increases for new child sexual abuse material. INHOPE and its member hotlines experienced a 14% increase in the number of complaints concerning illegal online content handled globally in 2013, with a dramatic 47% increase in the number of confirmed reports of child sexual abuse material. Perpetrators are no longer those whose physical presence are around the children, but across the boundary.

This issue cannot be dealt by countries working in isolation. It demands a coordinated global response done by governments, technology companies and civil society. WePROTECT Global Alliance to End Child Sexual Exploitation Online was formed as a response towards that issue. It is a global coalition of countries and organisations, brought together by the UK, dedicated to national and global action to end the sexual exploitation of children online. WePROTECT Global Alliance's mission is transforming the way to deal with online child sexual exploitation. The expected result is more victims being identified and safeguarded, more perpetrators being apprehended and finally, an end to online child sexual exploitation.

The core project of the WePROTECT Global Alliance is to establish and develop a coordinated national response to online child sexual exploitation, guided by the WePROTECT Model National Response. This sets out what countries need to do:

- Enhancing efforts to identify victims and ensuring that victims receive the necessary assistance, support and protection;

- Enhancing efforts to investigate online child sexual exploitation cases, identify and prosecute offenders;
- Enhancing efforts to increase public awareness of the risks posed by children's activities online, including grooming and self-production images that result in the production of new child sexual abuse material that may be distributed online; and
- Reducing as much as possible any child sexual abuse materials online and re-victimization of children whom sexual abuse is depicted to.

The Model National Response lists the main capabilities that a country needs in order to achieve a comprehensive national response to online child sexual exploitation. The six categories set out what countries need to do:

- In policy and governance – To ensure leadership and commitment at the highest level
- In criminal justice – For effective and successful investigations, convictions and offender management
- In victim support – So there are appropriate support services for children and young people
- Engaging society – To prevent CSEA
- Engaging industry – In developing solution to prevent and tackle CSE
- Engaging media and Communications - Awareness raised among the public, professional and policy makers

The Model will help a country to assess its current response to CSEA, identify gaps, prioritise national effort on filling those gaps and, by establishing a common set of aspirations for all countries, enhance international cooperation. Therefore, the model is descriptive, not prescriptive: it does not say how a country should put in place the capabilities needed. Besides, it is not government-centric because other stakeholders and partners will provide many of the capabilities. This is why WePROTECT Global Alliance forms a national multi-stakeholders group to coordinate a comprehensive national action.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that what is happening online is a reflection of society-at-large and the risks that children face offline – in their homes, schools, communities and institutions that are meant to be protective. Therefore, if we want to keep children safe, we need to integrate strategies to address online sexual abuse and exploitation into wider protective strategies.

## **Good Practice**

### **1. Child Participation through Technology**

- UNICEF has facilitated child participation through the UN-Report platform. The platform interacted with 4,000 young people to identify priority actions aimed at ending violence against children in schools, homes and communities. Findings were shared with government agencies to inform the new National Strategy to Prevent Violence in Childhood (2016 -2020)
- In Benin, Plan International has been exploring how text messaging (SMS) and the Internet can support reporting of incidents of violence against children and improve both immediate and longer term responses. The pilot has involved raising awareness among young people and training them to create and upload multi-media content about the situation in their area.
- Proteja Brasil (Protect Brazil) is an application for smart phones and tablet computers that enables fast and effective reporting of violence against children and adolescents. Based on location, it displays telephone numbers, addresses and the best routes to the nearest police stations, protection councils and other organizations that help to combat violence against children in major Brazilian cities. It also provides information about different forms of violence. The app is part of the Convergence Agenda, a national initiative designed to protect boys and girls from violence during large events, such as the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

- A mobile application called MediCapt, designed to help clinicians more effectively collect, document and preserve forensic medical evidence of sexual violence, is being tested in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Developed by Physicians for Human Rights, this tool converts a standardized medical intake form for forensic documentation to a digital platform and combines it with a secure mobile camera to facilitate forensic photography. Medi-Capt helps preserve critical forensic medical evidence of mass atrocities, including sexual violence and torture, for use in courts.
- In Guatemala, in the context of a Population Council project, girl leaders and members of girls' clubs have been involved in a community mapping exercise. Using GPS technology, they have plotted every household, building and route in their communities to produce maps.

2. Churches Commitments to Children (CC2C) UNICEF and WCC entered into a formal global partnership in September 2015 and signed a Global Letter on Collaboration in November 2016. Another Letter on Collaboration was signed in January 2018. Taking inspiration from the Children's Rights and Business Principles, UNICEF and the WCC, through abroad consultative process including 235 experts, developed the "Churches' Commitments to Children", a document that outlines actions that member churches may take to respect and support children's rights.

Churches endorsing the Commitments aim to:

- a. Promote child protection through church communities by agreeing to develop and implement child safeguarding policies
  - b. Serve as safe spaces and be equipped to support and refer children who are victims of violence
- Actively contribute to the attainment of SDGs 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children) and 5.3 (Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage

and female genital mutilation), promoting awareness about the risks and consequences of violence against children and adolescents.

- Help protect children and adolescents in emergencies by undertaking preparedness and preventative measures. They will coordinate their response with relevant stake-holders, both in conflict and natural disasters settings.
  - Advocate influencing policy, budgets and public attitudes towards treatment of refugees and migrants.
  - Play a role in implementing SDG 16.9 (By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration) and pay special attention to children and adolescents at risk of statelessness.
- c. Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents:
- Seek to engage children and adolescents and their families or caregivers pro-actively in church life
  - Promote awareness and understanding of the importance of children and adolescents as stakeholders within society, their right to be heard and of their ability to contribute to decisions affecting their lives.
- d. Raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents:
- Model excellent ecological stewardship within their churches and to the world by promoting systems and behavior that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate.
  - Amplify key messages promoting urgent action to prevent further increase of global greenhouse gas emissions and influence decisions taken by local and national authorities with a view to developing alternative sources of energy with a low carbon foot-print.



- Influence behaviour change at the local level and empower communities to build resilience.

The Churches' Commitments to Children document was endorsed by the WCC's highest governing body (Executive Committee) in December 2016 in China. It was disseminated to all WCC member churches and partners by the WCC General Secretary in March 2017 with a letter inviting all churches to discuss the Commitments among their congregations and consider making them their own. After only 3 months after dissemination, over 200 positive responses were received from member churches to this invitation.

# Poverty and Child Labour in Asia

- Rohan P. Gideon

In many of the discourses on child labour, poverty is considered to be the driving force behind families forcing their children to work. While that is true in an immediate context, we need to see that poverty is by itself not the sole factor. Poverty comes to play at different levels: poverty as a by-product of deeper cultural factors of each context; and simultaneously, on its own, poverty creates a strong nexus with cultural aspects that sustain it.

In this paper, taking India as a case study, the focus will be on how child labour works in the intersections of class, caste, gender and globalisation; how these factors create and work in nexus with the notion of poverty. So poverty is both historical as well as a continuous recreated situation that sustains child labour.

With this, we will explore the relationship of Poverty in Asia with regards to child labour. It covers a wide spectrum of themes of which some of them are culturally unique and some could be understood in a wider perspective. Therefore this paper does not give any final answer but offers ways to analyse poverty in various cultural contexts.

## **Need for Intersectionality as an Analytical Tool**

Intersectionality is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy development that addresses multiple discriminations and helps us understand how different sets of identities impact on access to rights and opportunities.

Intersectionality is a feminist theory, a methodology for research, and a springboard for a social justice action agenda. It starts from the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived

from social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. People are members of more than one community at the same time, and can simultaneously experience oppression and privilege (e.g. a highly placed and respected professional could yet suffer domestic violence in her home). Intersectional analysis aims to reveal multiple identities, exposing the different types of discrimination and disadvantage that occur as a consequence of the combination of identities.

This analysis further distinguishes between the external sphere (state and society) and the internal sphere (family and community) where children experience interrelated forms of discrimination, and shows how it increases the disempowerment of a child. It is argued that in order to protect the human dignity of all children on an equal footing, existing human rights law must be interpreted and assessed in a way that cuts across traditionally separated legal categories. Furthermore, in order to fully address violations against the rights of a child, legal provisions are necessary that directly target intersectional discrimination.

If we do not use intersectional analysis, then all our debates will remain silent about the meanings that are created and circulated about the labouring children, about the reasons for the creation of such meanings, and about the types of identities that are floated, thus making the oppressed state children a non-discourse. This demands us as a church to employ social analytical tools along with your theologies and spiritualities to understand how multiple identities of child labourers should be discerned to understand the complexities of their plight.

### **Poverty's Nexus with Various Cultural and Traditional Factors**

*Caste, Class, Gender, Globalization and Migration as causes for Children at Risk and Vulnerabilities:*

As much as it is important to understand the theories for vulnerabilities of children, it is also important to comprehend some of the determining factors that creates and sustains the identity of children. There are webs of determinants that put children-at-risk

and make them vulnerable. This section looks into some of the determining factors in Indian context that have put children-at-risk.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has charted out some Worst forms of Child Labor that includes forced involvement of children in prostitution and for the production of pornography. A quick look at the list of the worst forms of labour deepens our understanding of the gravity of child labour. In 1999, the 184 member nations of the International Labour Organization passed the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (Convention 182).

Article 3 of Convention 182 defines ‘Worst Forms’<sup>1</sup> as:

- a. All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- b. The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c. The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- d. Work, which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

The above explanation on the Worst Forms of CL will immediately give us a picture of vulnerability that Asian children face. As if this was not unsettling enough, the deliberations on child labour, being situated at the intersections of economic, cultural, legal, religious, and social institutions, have eluded attempts to comprehend, address and confront the phenomenon of child labour. While any discrimination based on caste, class, gender and tribe is “racial”,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182):  
<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/childlabour.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Concern for Child Labour: A Statement submitted to the National Committee set up by the Prime Minister of India (facilitated by the UNE Division of the Ministry of External Affairs Government of India) in preparation for the World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/cccl.pdf>. (9 Nov. 2007) For similar views, see, Manoranjan Mohanty, *Caste, Class, Gender...*, 36.

traditionally, a strong caste-class enterprise has been and continues to be the bedrock for the unabated exploitation of children in India. This chapter examines the serious fallouts of such nexus and their collaboration with other institutions like neo-colonization in the form of globalization. These collaborations are perceived not only as the determinants of the economic activity like child labour but also as the ones “producing and circulating meanings” and identities of the children-at-risk. Specifically about child labour, it is intriguing to comprehend and evaluate the sector that child labour conceptually comes under: the Unorganised Sector or the Informal Sector. Prakash Louis observes that being in the workforce of unorganized sector is not only an economic reality but also social and political in the Indian context. Most of the workers of informal sector<sup>3</sup> come from the Dalit, Tribal, minority and most backward caste communities. It is in this reality that escapes many social scientists who examine this phenomenon. Caste, class, ethnicity and gender are fundamentally contributive factors to being a worker in the Unorganised sector. Since the ruling elite comes from the dominant communities, it has no political will to address these issues. The rural- urban bias is another factor one has to observe in this sector.

An overwhelming majority (around 85%) of child labourers in India comes from communities and groups which are at the lower rungs of our traditional, caste-based social hierarchy, i.e. the SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities, especially Muslims.<sup>4</sup> These, in short are the poor of India and it is largely from the families and communities of the poor that child labourers come. It is therefore, not accidental that studies of many industries show that a substantial presence of child labour comes from hazardous activities such as in the carpet industry; the match, brassware, glass and bangle, lock-making, slate, gem-polishing industries; and the tea plantations. The overwhelming majority of the children working in these industries come from

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<sup>3</sup> For a comparative analysis of these sectors, and their working in different states of India, See Siddhartha Sarkar, “Theorizing in Informal Sector: Concept and Context”, *Social Action* 54/4 (Oct-Dec 2004): 359-373; Supriya Roy Chowdhury, “Globalization and Labour”, *Economic and Political EPW* 39/4 (Jan. 3 2004), 105; NCC Review CXXVIII/ 7 (Aug. 2007), under the theme: ‘Labour and Life in India’.

Prakash Louis, “Editorial,” *SA* 54/4 (Oct-Dec), iv- v. This issue of *Social Action* has is dedicated to discuss the challenges thrown up in the Unorganised sectors.

<sup>4</sup> ECFW- vol. 4..., 141. Also see, Manoranjan Mohanty, *Class, Caste, Gender ...*, 20.

Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Muslim communities. The match industry in Sivakasi is seen to employ mainly Dalit children, especially girls. Glass manufacturing industry in Firozabad district has around 45% of its labouring children from SC communities. Among the Beedi workers of North Arcot, TN, the majority is from Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes. Carpet Industry, especially in UP, has 50% hired labour, and slightly over 50% of hired help comes from the economically poorer Scheduled Castes and Adivasis.<sup>5</sup>

K. Jamanadas observes caste system as a contributing factor to child labour in India just as UNICEF too has made similar study and researched remarks. Jamanadas quotes UNICEF:

The rigidity of the caste system in India has, among other things, contributed to the mushrooming of child labour in the country, says the UNICEF. In the report “The state of the world’s children”, the UNICEF said the dominant cultural group in India might not wish its own children to do hazardous labour but it would not be so concerned if young people from racial, ethnic or economic minorities did it. Citing the magnitude of child labour, it said, “In India, the view has been that some people are born to rule and to work with their minds while others, the vast majority, are born to work with their bodies.” “Many traditionalists had been unperturbed about lower-caste children failing to enroll in or dropping out of school,” the UNICEF said, adding “and if these children end up doing hazardous labour, it is likely to be seen as their lot in life.” The UNICEF’s observation came against the backdrop of the recent Supreme Court judgment banning child labour in hazardous and non-hazardous industries.<sup>6</sup>

Children from the marginalized castes and tribes continue to be ‘structurally disadvantaged’ despite amendments to the labour laws and to the issues of caste discrimination in India. Scholars

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<sup>5</sup> Geetha B. Nambissan, “Social Exclusion, Children’s Work and Education” in *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs versus Rights*, edited by Naila Kabeer, Geetha B. Nambissan and Ramya Subramanian (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 115. For similar views, see, Amit Verma, *Why Child Labour?* <http://www.org/rdv4n1/childlab.htm> (Children’s Day, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> K. Jamanadas, [http://www.ambedkar.org/research/Caste\\_System\\_Contributed\\_To\\_Child\\_Labour\\_In\\_India.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/research/Caste_System_Contributed_To_Child_Labour_In_India.htm).

have made efforts to decipher this web of determinants and lay these concerns threadbare with mixed results. This chapter analyses these concerns and sees how the terms like ‘Child’, ‘Child labour’, ‘Child Rights’ and the related emancipatory discourses have been dealt with and articulated by policy-making bodies and experts at the conceptual level and at the level of implementation in a neo-colonial milieu.

### **Caste- Class- Gender- Adultism, Migration and Neo-colonization Nexus in Child Labour**

The question ‘why children work?’ has evoked responses from the perspectives that researchers have taken. While the following determinants are presented under ‘separate’ debates, they are a tapestried lot.

#### *Poverty Debate*

If we very plainly say that poverty is the issue for child labour, it raises false hope that once children and their families have earned enough money, then one day they could get out of the clutches of labour. Therefore, the debate that poverty is solely responsible for child labour supports the inevitability of child labour that has to be reckoned with. Experts like Neel Sharda, K. K. Khatu, Sabita Babani and others<sup>7</sup> subscribe to the view that extreme poverty is the main determinant of child labour in India. Agriculture, domestic help and any form of labour that is assumed to fetch an amount for survival will be wrongly glorified as a way out of poverty. But we know that child labour is very cheap and readily available in agricultural and rural sectors- both in primary and secondary jobs.<sup>8</sup> Poverty makes parents prioritize working than schooling. In such serious cases, age restrictions and other safety measures are compromised with. Otherwise, the belief is that, children would turn into anti-social elements by resorting to thieving and similar income- oriented activities.

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<sup>7</sup> Neel Sharda, *The Legal, Economic and Social Status of the Indian Child*; K. K. Khatu, *The Working Children in India* (Baroda Operation Research Group, 1983); Sabita Babani, “Child Labour: A Social Problem,” *The Economic Times* (April 10, 1982); and, Centre of Social Research, *Working Condition of Children Employed in Unorganised Sector- A Case in Sivakasi* (Madras: 1984).

<sup>8</sup> ECFW: Also see, Shantha Sinha, “Child Labour and Education,” ..., 14- 19.

Kaushik Basu and Pham Hoang Van show that “child labour as a mass phenomenon occurs not because of parental selfishness but because of the parents’ concern for the household’s survival”. Basu and Van establish that “A family will send the children to the labour market only if the family’s income from non-child-labour sources drops very low.” This is why, they stated, “the children of the non-poor seldom work even in very poor countries... In other words, children’s leisure or, more precisely, non-work is a luxury good in the household’s consumption in the sense that a poor household cannot afford to consume this good, but it does so as soon as the household income rises sufficiently.”<sup>9</sup>

Many cannot afford education although elementary education is relatively free. There is a belief that uneducated children are an asset and the desire to educate them becomes double liability. Gender typing of work makes the situation worse for girls. Girls are found to do domestic chores. Therefore, the argument goes that “any attempt to abolish...[child labor] through legal recourse would, under the circumstances, not be practical since this would put the already poor families under acute economic stress”<sup>10</sup> However, the other side of the argument is that child labour is all the more justified with concern for the employers than for the children and their families<sup>11</sup> because poverty is a consequence of disproportionate accumulation of beneficial resources, constituted by en suite imbalance and a pattern of expansion, which advances these disproportionate feature.

### *Illiteracy Debate*

A commonly understood argument of the families for not sending their children to school is “inadequate schools”, “lack of schools”, or even “the expense of schooling” and therefore leaving some children with little else to do but work. Nearly 53.95 million

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.indiauncut.com/iublog/article/why-children-labour/\(15.9.2006\)](http://www.indiauncut.com/iublog/article/why-children-labour/(15.9.2006))

<sup>10</sup> Shantha Sinha “Child Labour and Education”..., 15- 16. Studies conducted show that child Labour in rural areas is often ‘light’, so much so that these children ought to be able to get education without seriously cutting into their work commitments, if they had access to proper schools. Kaushik Basu, [http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story\\_id/000413.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/000413.pdf) (9. 11. 2007)

<sup>11</sup> Shantha Sinha “Child Labour and Education,”..., 16



children did not attend school in 1999-2000, which would mean 62.35 million children in the labour force, or 27.32 per cent of the child population between five to 14 years of age. In India, the 1999-2000 National Sample Survey (NSS) data indicate a high incidence of child labour, with 8.4 million children active in the labour force. If the wider definition of child labour is accepted, which is all children who do not attend school should be counted as child labour, the incidence of child labour will be enormous.

The attitudes of parents also contribute to child labour; some parents feel that children should work in order to develop skills useful in the job market, instead of taking advantage of a formal education.<sup>12</sup> The vicissitudes of rural agricultural and non-agricultural work and the schedule of schools do not necessarily preclude school-going children from working for wages or in family occupations. Schools, which could be a source to wean children out of the labour market and put them through a process of learning, skill enhancing would not implement the necessary objectives.

Shanta Sinha argues that, if the official sources put the figure of child labour at 17 million and those not attending schools in the 5- 14 age-group are nearly 74 million, the government's schemes and legislations on child labour would cater only to those 17 million. So what happens to 54 million children who are neither child labourers nor privileged to go to school? Shatha Sinha's contention is that these school dropouts are never "idle" but are invariably drawn into various forms of household labour but are deprived of the attention and benefits promised by the schemes and legislations. Therefore, they are "missing" children, and any later legislation would ignore their presence as child labourers.

### *Class- Caste Interface Debate*

The teasing out of the strands of caste structure and its economic implications related to the social mobility of child labourers in India is largely overlooked by many scholars and researchers because it strikes at the age- old rock bed of the traditional social

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<sup>12</sup> Azadi India Foundation, *Child Labour in India*, <http://azadindia.org/social-issues/child-labour-in-india.html> (Children's Day, 2007).

structure.<sup>13</sup> The tapestried phenomenon of class- caste is also attributed to the growth of capitalism in India. This has its roots in British colonial regime when the British made use of the local raw material and-- when necessary-- labour.

Analysing this trend, Manoranjan Mohanty explains<sup>14</sup> how later, in the post-independent India, modern technology-based industrialisation rose on the profits of Green Revolution. This happened largely in the states like Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and some pockets of other states. Semi-feudal system and poverty persisted in many of these states including Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The labour force in these regions was not only landless and unorganized but also from scheduled castes, backward classes and scheduled tribes.

### *Class- Caste- Gender Interface Debate*

It is estimated that about one- third of all child labourers in South East Asian region are girls. Interestingly, in most of the studies, female child labourers are invisible part of the child labour statistics. It is investigated<sup>15</sup> that the interaction of caste- class structures with the male- dominant ideologies is one of the main causes contributing to the growing menace of female child labour, and the nature of suffering they undergo. In this plight their biological categories are translated into social roles, which have denied these girl children justice and dignity.

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<sup>13</sup> Although it's hard to find exact figure of child labourers in terms of percentage - at national level- who are dalits, one can draw this sort of conclusion by putting together data researched at state levels and in various types of child labour units at various levels. The explanation of many such conclusion are as "nearly ninety percent are dalits", "more than ninety percent are dalits" and almost all are dalits". Even the UNICEF in one of its recent research reports has agreed with this magnanimity of the problem. K, Jamanadas, Caste System Contributed to Child Labour in India, [http://www.ambedkar.org/research/Caste\\_System\\_Contributed\\_To\\_Child\\_Labour\\_In\\_India.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/research/Caste_System_Contributed_To_Child_Labour_In_India.htm). (14 Sep. 2006) Also see Global March Against Child Labour, World Cup Campaign- Child Labour and Sporting Goods, [www.globalmarch.org/campaigns/worldcupcampaign/child\\_labour.php](http://www.globalmarch.org/campaigns/worldcupcampaign/child_labour.php); (15 Sep. 2006)

<sup>14</sup> Manoranjan Mohanty, *Class, Caste and Gender*, 3rd reprint, (New Delhi, SAGE, 2006), 34.

<sup>15</sup> For a helpful explanation on this reality and for further leads see Godwin Shiri and Rohan Gideon, "The Plight of Female Child Labourers: A Case Study of Workers in Bangalore". For a detailed treatment of this subject, see Peter Robb, "Introduction: Meanings of Labour in Indian Social Context," in *Dalit Movements and the Meanings of Labour in India*, edited by Peter Robb (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 1-67

There are specific areas of work that the female children are preferred over and against adults and male children. Domestic help is one such area where the traditional understanding of gender-typing works. Reports suggest “feminisation” of agricultural sector.<sup>16</sup> The traditional treatment of male children as the perpetuators of family tradition has attached more economic value to them, and therefore, releases them from such works traditionally allotted to girls. This has disadvantaged female children in parental care where they are paid lesser attention than their male siblings and in perpetuating the dominant ideology.

One of the most unfortunate discriminations that female children undergo more often than their male counterparts is sexual abuse. All information on such abuses would not see the light of day because victims either hesitate to share those experience for the fear of social stigma or as with a younger age group- they are not even able to comprehend the existence or seriousness of such abuse and are unaware of the forms they are expressed in.<sup>17</sup> The NCEUS reiterates this in its report by mentioning that in the age group of 10-14, the participation of female children is 7.36 as compared to 7.04 males, especially in rural areas. The same is true of the age group of 5-9.<sup>18</sup>

Among the labouring girls, the crucial distinction between domestic labour and other types of (child) labour is the lack of physical separation between the workplace and the living space. Especially those children who are live-in helpers or full-time (also referred to as bhandha<sup>20</sup>) are very far away from their family, usually in rural districts. Children’s service commonly begins when they are between six and nine years old, and girls, for various reasons, are often withdrawn again when they are ‘grown-up’ at approximately 15 years (UNICEF 2004). Domestics carry out various tasks at all times of the day. The most common tasks involve cleaning, washing dishes, mopping the floor, and serving food. The pay is meagre, with

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<sup>16</sup> *The Hindu*, Kochi (10 Aug. 2007), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Godwin Shiri and Rohan Gideon, “*The Plight of Female Child Labourers*,” 32- 36.

<sup>18</sup> *National Commission for Enterprise in the Unorganised Sector*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> Edmund Newey, *The Child as Source of Theological Anthropology*. Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 2012, 2.

an average monthly salary of Tk. 224 (euro 2.50). Commonly, child domestics receive food, clothes and lodging, which is sometimes the principal benefit of the work. In addition to a huge workload and long hours with little reward, all forms of violence have been reported to be very common (UNICEF).

### *Adultism Debate*

Attempts to understand who children-at-risk are complex because of the various contexts surrounding it. Just in Christian thought alone, the child/children has been portrayed in multiple and conflicting senses. Therefore it is appropriate to bear this complexity in mind while talking about children. A major blockade in understanding children or a child is the adult-bias definitions of children and childhood. Edmund Newey rightly puts it when he says: ‘The child always eludes adult pretensions to objectivity. As portrayed by the mature human being, the child is an imaginary construct, never innocent of the author’s cultural preconceptions.’<sup>19</sup>

### *Globalization Debate*

It’s plausible that globalization contributes positively to the lifestyle and technology of the society, possibilities and generates income for economically backward families.<sup>20</sup> However, the real- life situation is far from such notions. One also needs to face the truth of the discomforts that globalization has brought upon. Joseph Stiglitz says that while globalization has the potential to empower the weaker economies, the way it has been managed so far by the leading monetary agencies and trade agreement needs radical rethinking.<sup>21</sup> Dislocation of livelihood under the New Economic Policy as attributed to globalization is often- in a positive sense- considered as “structural adjustment with a human face”.<sup>22</sup> However, the “hollowness of the approach underlying the trickle-down theory gets easily exposed if its implications are laid bare”.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Eric V. Edmonds, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Eedmonds/clhbk.pdf> (9 Nov. 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Supriya RoyChowdhury, “Globalization and Labour”, 105; Nanjunda D. C. and M. Annapurna, “Small Hands in Silicon City- Bangalore: Some Facts and Experiences at Grass Root Level,” JSS 13/2, 151: <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-13-0-000-000-2006-Web/JSS-13-2-000-000-2006-Abst-Text/JSS-13-2-151-156-2006-417-Nanjunda-D-C/JSS-13-2-151-156-2006-417-Nanjunda-D-C-Text.pdf> (15 Sep. 2007).

The current discussions on child rights and child labour are taking place in this particular international context, i.e. that of globalization. Needless to say, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank as part of a package deal for bailing them out of the debt crisis have forced structural adjustment programmes upon the developing nations. A consequential integral element in the neo-liberal paradigm is that growth is crucial and that this growth will slowly trickle down to the poor in the long run. As one can notice,

The process of liberalization and globalization isolate the non-economic considerations from the focal economic considerations of growth and profit. Therefore, the problems of the poor and the deprived may actually get accentuated.<sup>24</sup>

But these are further exacerbated by the operation of the international system wherein developing countries are dependent in myriad ways on industrialized nations. "Colonial inheritance, technical and financial dependence structures and chronically deteriorating terms of trade, and more recently heavy indebtedness, have contributed and still do contribute very distinctly and very directly to the impoverishment of large sections of Third World populations".<sup>25</sup> In the interaction between the household/ family as a micro-economy and economic programmes of the state as a macro-economy (indigenous capitalism versus predatory capitalism), the pressures on the members of the family (especially women) to increase family income in the face of inflation and decreasing social sector budgets has resulted in more children being put to work either to substitute for the mother in the domestic chores in the case of girls or to add to the family kitty.

### *Poverty and Migration*

A compelling case for arguing on behalf of children is the sheer magnitude of the migrant and refugee children. In the recent

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<sup>23</sup> S. P. Shukla, "Globalisation: Lives and Livelihood," A Lecture delivered at the National Seminar on Globalization- Life and Livelihood Issues, held at Kottayam, Kerala, 28 Feb.- 2 March, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Manoranjan Mohanty, *Class, Caste and Gender...*, 23. Also see, Satya Prakash Dash, "Globalization and Labour: The Need for Institutional Mechanism," *Social Action* 58/ 1 (Jan- March, 2008): 59- 72.

<sup>25</sup> Jolly, Richard and Cornia, Andrea Giovanni: "The Impact of World Recession on Children," UNICEF, 1984.

decades, there has been a large-scale movement of migrants from West Asia to Europe. Following the EU- Turkey deal, children, specifically unaccompanied children, are being detained in inhumane conditions for extended periods of time. These children are fleeing bombs, bullets and torture in war zones like Syria, only to end up stranded and living in desperate conditions which lack the right protection, information, and services they so desperately need.

It is estimated that the number of people in need has now reached 13.5 million people including 6 million children. Escaping from death, persecution, extreme poverty, this drives children to risk their lives to come to Europe on dangerous voyages by sea. Libyan refugees have been arriving in Egypt in increasing numbers since late 2014. More than 120,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Egypt. 43% of these refugees are children. Since the beginning of 2016, over 88,000 refugees have arrived in Italy, 17% of which are children. The number of children travelling alone without their parents arriving in Italy has more than doubled this year compared to the same period last year (Save the Children, 2015).

## Conclusion

Olga Niewenhuys, an anthropologist, highlights the paradox inherent in such child labour talks. While the global discourse represents childhood through the ideals of innocence, she argues that one could recast the discourses on child labour in terms of its inability to address the question of exclusion of children from remunerative employment.<sup>26</sup>

The interconnectedness of the above determinants can be approached by two large frameworks of thoughts: first, the discourse of Development where poverty and related issues like caste- class, and globalization are the key factor, and second, the discourse that the educational system is to blame for the unabated rise in child

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<sup>26</sup> Niewenhuys argues that, the governments, while condemning the relatively uncommon forms of waged labour as exploitation, sanctioned a broad spectrum of other activities like house keeping, child minding, helping adults for no pay, working in family farms and shops, delivering news papers, seasonal works in farms and workshops. This establishes borderline between morally desirable and pedagogically sensible activities on one hand, and the exploitation of children on the other. Niewenhuys, "The Paradox of Child Labour and Anthropology,"..., 937.

labour.<sup>27</sup> These legislations and interventions regarding these debates could be sorted out as intra-national, supra-national and extra-national.<sup>28</sup> In the battle against child labour a variety of laws and legislations have been implemented and- even more- discussed. The objective of any legislation is to guard the interests of the citizens from any forms of exploitation. They are the expression of the collective conscience of the society and make the functioning conform to these expressions.

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<sup>27</sup> For more conceptual explanation of these trends, see, Naila Kabeer, "Deprivation, Discrimination and Delivery: Competing Explanations for Child Labour and Educational Failure," in *Child Labour and the Right to Education in South Asia: Needs versus Rights...*, 351- 385.

<sup>28</sup> Intra-national effort consists of the laws that a country enacts and interventions that it 18 plans in order to control child Labour within the national boundary. Supra-national interventions are those attempted through international organizations, such as the ILO, the WTO, and the UNICEF, which by establishing conventions, and encouraging and cajoling nations to ratify them, have tried to curb child Labour. The most powerful, and also controversial, instrument that the supra-national institutions can use to curb child Labour is the imposition of 'international Labour standards', that is, a set of minimal rules and conditions for Labour which all countries are expected to satisfy. Since the adoption of such standards makes it possible. Thanks to controversy and a divergence of opinion, the world has been slow to adopt International Labour standards. This has led some developed countries to consider legislation and other action in their own countries, which could curb child Labour in developing nations. Such actions are termed extra-national. Kaushik Basu, [http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story\\_id/000413.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/story_id/000413.pdf) (9. 11. 2007).

# Violence against Children in Asia

- Eule Rico Bonganay

Good afternoon every one. It is a great pleasure for me to speak before you, fellow child rights advocates from different churches in Asia and other parts of the world.

I have prepared a paper entitled Children and Violence: A glimpse of situation in Asia and the Pacific. This includes the data and valuable information that I was able to collect from the researches of different child rights experts, institutions and, of course from our experience on the ground.

I would be happy to also include your input and additional information since you are also working on different areas concerning children in your respective countries.

Today I see people in front of me whose aspirations are like mine. We see a chance to change the world, turn it into a better place and see hope in the eyes of our children. We take that chance and we do the best we can, to give the children the opportunity to develop themselves and find their meaningful role in the society.

It is our responsibility to do what we think is right for children so that they may become better adults who will not only see the same chance but also take the same responsibility. This is our social responsibility for the future generations.

However, some children are on the streets-begging for food and trying to earn a living to survive. We live the lives of tributes in an arena, like the one in Hunger Games. Striving to live and wishing to live for another day. While the narrative of Peeta and Katniss is just fiction and they win the game, in real life many Katniss and Peeta never manage to live a life they dream of, no matter how hard they try to survive. They never win to survive.

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Yes, we are here to defend and protect the rights of the children, but we were not born having this knowledge. We have been tapped and our consciousness was raised; we were educated to be defenders of children's rights, and we learned how to advocate for children's rights. We take it upon ourselves to do the same with today's children.

Our consultation today is an opportunity to think about how we can pass this torch, pass on this advocacy, and enable the children of today to take this responsibility.

Violence happens everywhere and as we hold this momentous event, there are people- both young and old - who are in a situation where their rights and welfare are under threat. Children tend to be more vulnerable with these vicious acts because they are physically weaker than adults and are still in the process of developing their own competencies.

The UN defines violence against children in line with article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse." It happens in the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect and exploitation.

Globally, there are 1 billion children aged 2 – 17 years old who have experienced violence. Evidence-based researches show that violence against children has lifelong, profound and damaging consequences. Newly published research commissioned by UNICEF revealed that child abuse and violence is costing countries in East Asia and the Pacific around US \$209 billion/year, equivalent to 2 percent of the region's GDP.

### **Violence at Home**

Violence at home is at an all-time high. Discipline varies from one culture to another and corporal punishment has taken this toll. The blurry line between discipline and violence should be made clear, what is tolerable and what is bordering on destructive to children, affecting their confidence and self-worth.

In East Asia, over 70 percent of children endure corporal punishment at home. It should be noted that only two countries in Asia - namely Mongolia and Turkmenistan, prohibit corporal punishment. Commitments from other Asian countries for complete legal ban are yet to be realized.

The more alarming fact is that the children who experience violence, if not properly handled and addressed, are likely to commit violence against other children. Men who have witnessed their parents' violence are three times more likely to abuse their own wives than children of non-violent parents.

The Asian countries with alarming rates of domestic violence are Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Iraq; the cultures in these countries have low regard for women and their children, and are treated like mere subordinates or worse, as properties of men.

The long road to absolute realization of this goal starts with education among our children who will later become parents. This could be a perversion of traditions and family norms, where violence has long been permitted as a form of discipline, but it is tricky and necessary to study and explain the negative effects of both psychological and physical violence against children.

## **Violence at School**

Schools are considered as second homes for children. However, a study conducted in 2015 showed that seven out of 10 children in the Asian region experience violence at school. Kids who are bullied or beaten at school avoid attending school, in turn harming their education and future prospects.

In an elementary school, Pangasinan, 10 students filed a complaint against their teacher for whipping the back of their legs with a bamboo switch.

According to the students, the teacher decided to give her class a surprise test with the right minus wrong stipulation. Aside from that, she also decided to penalize the students by whipping the back of their legs with a bamboo switch for every wrong answer that

they got. Of the 44 students given the surprise test, only six of them passed the exam, which enraged the teacher.

Teacher had the students lined up and whipped them hard, one by one. Some of the students received up to 15 strikes from the bamboo switch. The whipping went on for about an hour and she even threatened the students and their parents' lives. Because of the strikes, most of the students had marks and welts on their calves.

Owing to the trauma that they endured, most of the students refused to go to school during the following days. The 10 students and their parents who filed the complaints plan to pursue the case so that justice may be served.

Aside from bullying, violence in school is recorded in conflict areas in the Philippines. Schools intended for Lumad people are being attacked by state forces in the form of military occupation; harassment, threat and intimidation of students and teachers; destruction of facilities; extra judicial killings, among others.

## **Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence against children is a gross violation of children's rights. Despite numerous measures against it, with some countries imposing capital punishment, rape remains a global reality.

In India, almost half of the children's population is reported to have been sexually assaulted. What is more alarming is that 99% of these cases go unreported. Aside from the absence of strong law against rape, other factors in underreporting include fear of stigmatization, low conviction rates and lack of trust in police authorities, especially when the alleged perpetrators are also men in uniform.

In India, activists call for justice for Asifa Bano, an 8-year old Muslim girl who was gang raped and killed by at least four police officers, a retired government official and a juvenile in Kashmir, New Delhi, India. The culture of violence against girls further proves the gender inequality and the disadvantages of being a girl in a backward feudal culture where male privilege atrociously knows no respect for women's and children's rights.

In southern Philippines, a 14-year old Manobo girl was repeatedly raped in two separate incidents by three members of Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) who occupied their house while conducting counter-insurgency operation in their community. The perpetrators were not held accountable since the family of the victim opted not to pursue the case initially filed against them.

In the Philippine law, sexual intercourse with a child as young as 12 is NOT automatically considered as child rape. We are the lowest among our ASEAN neighbors, with an average of 16 years old. This current policy state enables more predators to commit child rape.

There are many Asifa around the globe, and there are many monsters that assault girls and boys; none of this is should happen again but the gaps in the justice system in Asian countries continue to allow these to go on. The double standards of our society do not help in guarding our children from harm. The culture of gender-based violence and impunity seeps through our daily culture through the violence and sexual aggression shown as entertainment on TV, social media, song lyrics and computer games. There is a need for early education to discuss the gender equality, respect and love to eliminate gender based violence and to allow the fulfillment of gender equality.

Worse, in rape culture, victim-blaming tendencies and other misconceptions about sexual violence are being paddled by authorities who are supposedly duty-bound to protect them. In various occasions, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte regards rape as a matter of entertainment. He even offered immunity and protection to soldiers should they rape up to three women in the course of implementation of martial law in Mindanao.

## **Violence and Poverty**

Violence is experienced by children under circumstances of harsh socio-economic environment. Children suffer from it and are born into it though it was never a choice for them to make. Children who suffer from extreme inconveniences like extreme poverty and hunger never had a choice to live otherwise. They come into this

world and wake up with no food, no homes and no access to social services.

According to the latest data, around 400 million people, or one in ten, in Asia Pacific live in extreme poverty as part of their daily lives due to widening income inequality. This is despite the region's reputation as a vibrant economic zone. The reality of increasing poverty, inequality, widespread hunger, and the deteriorating conditions in the working- class family affect the well-being of the children. This condition has further made them vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation.

Asia Pacific is a home to more working children than any other regions in the world. An estimated 122 million children aged 5-14 years are compelled to work for their survival. In the Philippines, children work up to 13 – 16 hours a day. In some mining areas, children are lured into using illegal drugs to keep them awake inside the mine tunnels.

Southeast Asia is notorious for trafficking especially of children. Close to 200,000 migrant child laborers from Cambodia, Burma, Laos and Southern China, 70% of them boys, had been lured into Thailand. Many of them end up in streets, as street vendors, beggars and some even engage in sex trade.

Many children lured are put into prostitution due to their vulnerable socio-economic background, extreme poverty. They become prey of syndicates and the lucrative sexual exploitation business of the anti-social elements of our society.

Children are forced by circumstances to engage in such activities at a very young age in the hopes of earning subsistence, rather than having none at all. Despite numerous measures against it, human trafficking, sex trade, cyber prostitution, pedophilia and statutory rape remain a global reality. As overall societal conditions worsen under the so-called globalization, parents are pushed to seek employment outside their home countries. As a result, children are left to the care of family relatives or neighbors which could expose them to abuses and violence. It also increases their likelihood of participating in anti-social activities such as joining gangs, substance

abuse and others. Instead of addressing the problems with juvenile offending, governments in different countries resort to arresting and detaining children.

In the Philippines, we have championed the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2005. However, the current administration has been attempting to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility deviating from the arguments regarding the development of children's discernment and children acting under duress.

Most Filipino children live in impoverished communities; 26.5 million Filipino families are earning less than what they need to survive. Poverty leads children and their families to commit crimes in order to put food on their tables. The children in conflict with the law amount to 2% of the total alleged criminals in the Philippines and majority of their crimes are robbery and theft of food items and cash which are essential to survive.

Institutionalization of children in conflict with the law and children at risks usually cause more harm to them - exposing them to abuse, trauma and neglect. Detention facilities that are used to shelter children often do not meet the minimum legal requirements for shelters and are seriously overcrowded, understaffed and ill-equipped to meet the needs of children.

## **State Violence**

While our children's rights lens tend to focus more on domestic violence in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, neglect and exploitation, state sponsored abuses and economic violence are starting to take its toll on children in Asia and Pacific – with deeper and graver negative impacts.

While children's rights to protection from all forms of violence are enshrined in international laws, the State parties who signed and ratified it are also among the notorious child rights violators, which further emboldens the culture of violence and impunity.

In the recent report of Amnesty International, the Israeli government is allegedly liable for killing and torturing Palestinian

children with total impunity. Since 2000 up to September 2015, the Israeli occupation forces have arrested 8500 Palestinian children. Strangely, Israel is the only country in the world that prosecutes children in military courts, where 700 children are being sentenced to imprisonment annually.

Myanmar state security forces launched a large-scale campaign of ethnic cleaning against the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state August last year. Since then, around 700,000 people have fled homes towards Bangladesh and nearby countries to seek refuge. Almost 40 per cent of refugees are under the age of 12. Around 24,000 Rohingya were killed while 17,000 women and girls were reportedly raped by the military and the police.

To illustrate how vicious the violence is for the Rohingya children, let's take the case of a 16-month-old Rohingya baby, Mohammed Shohayet, who washed up dead on the banks of river Naf on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Mohammed and his family were crossing Naf River to make their way into Bangladesh and escape the violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state. However, during the journey their boat sank and Shohayet's mother, uncle and a three-year-old brother drowned too making his father the lone survivor. The image brings us the memory of the 3-year old boy Alan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee whose body was found on the Turkish coast in September 2015 after drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.

These children are already running away, fleeing from danger before they can walk on their own. Children are forced to live under circumstances of anger, hatred, uncertainty, living on war footing on a daily basis and living on a miracle of existence every day.

The Philippine government intensifies its campaign against narcotics leaving 20,000 suspected small drug peddlers and users dead, including minors – mostly from slum areas. According to the data of Children's Rehabilitation Center, more than 50 children were killed by police authorities and vigilante groups since July 2016 while thousands were rendered orphans.

Violence is a daily reality for children, especially for the poor and marginalized. We witness a cycle of abuse which seems to have no end in sight.

We are made to believe that our world has become a better place for children to live in. Notwithstanding the differences in context and settings, these images leave us to ask, “Are we really making progress in terms of upholding the rights and welfare of children? Is the world a better place for children just like what the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) claims? Has it reduced poverty, child labor and child mortality? Or has the world become more violent and brutal to children?”

While poverty reductions are big news and laudable, more children can now read and write, and more children have access to potable water; as child rights advocates we see through more children whose lives are in danger. We can talk about providing access to education, health care services and political participation of children today. But let us talk about the children who were brushed aside and never heard of. Why are there children in the middle of war, internally displaced, evacuated ever so often, running away to seek safer grounds? Why are children threatened?

These are some of the questions in the field of child rights protection. Luckily, we have hundreds and even thousands of answers to offer. However, the challenge is how to turn this solution into reality and action.

For a long time, child rights advocacy has been downgraded to feeding child a diet of charity while we keep silent on the structural set up making children and their families outcasts of this so-called economic growth. It is about time that we should step into the forefront and advance a genuine transformative agenda for children.

## **Our Tasks**

As protectors and advocates of the rights of children coming from Asia Pacific, it is our duty to exercise a critical analysis of the causes, context and the potential and actual detrimental impact of



violence on children so can determine how it should be appropriately addressed.

We should facilitate Children's Work Orientation among other relevant workshop and training relating to children's rights. We should stimulate children's programs in areas/fields identified as gaps in children's work. We should also institutionalize Child Protection Policy in schools, in offices, in churches and in the communities.

Violence prevention must be embedded in social services. Schools must become violence-free, end corporal punishment and crack down on bullying. Just like health professionals, we as first responders, who are likely to witness an injured or abused child, need to know how and when to report suspected abuse. Also, authorities need to find ways to avoid sending children into institutional care, where the chances of being abused are high.

We should end the silence! We should strengthen our work and form linkages for the promotion and popularization of children's rights, issues and concerns affecting children. We should conduct campaigns to educate the public, especially children regarding their rights.

However, the key to success is recognising that violence is not a private affair: governments have the primary duty to protect the rights of their citizens, and this includes a child's right to live free from fear.

We must forge linkages with each other to strengthen solidarity and coordinate our work for children so it may create a tangible impact.

Most importantly, we should ensure that children have the voice and are participating in the issues affecting them. We should help them understand their rights, provide necessary capacity-building and organize them into groups. We should encourage their participation in advocacy activities, especially in lobbying efforts with concerned institutions.

# Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children

- Ahmad Sofian

## Definition

Definition of ‘trafficking in children’ in Article 3 of the trafficking protocol (UN, 2000) consists of two aspects:

- (1) An action in the form of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, which is undertaken;
- (2) For exploitation purpose, including: prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal or organs.

The CRC refers sexual exploitation of children (SEC) to ‘all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse’ in its Article 34, and explicitly to “(b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.”

The forms of sexual exploitation of children are:

- Child/Early Marriage
- Child Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Materials
- Exploitation of children for prostitution
- Grooming (online/offline) for sexual purposes
- Sexual Exploitation of children in travel and tourism

## Situation in Asia

Asia is known to be a region of origin, transit and destination for people trafficking. Southeast Asia in particular has long been recognized as a significant source of trafficked persons. Regional characteristics, such as high levels of intra-regional (and largely irregular) migration, extensive land borders and disparities

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*Ahmad Sofian is the National Coordinator of ECPAT Indonesia*

in economic, employment and education opportunities enable the trafficking of people in Asia (Joudo Larsen, 2010).

Reported forms of child trafficking in the region include various forms of bonded and exploitative labour, such as domestic services, factory work, agriculture, fishing, construction, sexual exploitation (e.g.: child prostitution or the production of child pornography), forced marriage, adoption, and begging (UNICEF 2009) and conscription into military forces (US Department of State, 2009).

Recent data showed:

- 4.5 million victims of sexual exploitation around the world, 20 percent are children (ILO,2016)
- There are up to 100,000 people involved in sex workers in Cambodia, 30-35 percent are children
- In Indonesia, there are 43.5 percent of trafficking victims who are 14 years old
- Thai tourist visiting Lao PDR requested sex with school age children
- In Philippines, approximately 100,000 children are victims of all forms of sexual exploitation

### **Modus**

- Introduced to work by an acquaintance
- Deceived by an acquaintance or relative
- Taken by use of force
- Abduction or kidnapping or consent by parents or by guardians
- Promise of better economic opportunities
- Growing use by social medias network, chat room, email

The majority of trafficking in Asia is known to be intra-regional – from less developed countries to the more developed (Joudo Larsen, Lindley & Putt, 2009). Known pathways within the region include trafficking of:

- Children from Cambodia to Thailand for begging;
- Children from Bangladesh to Pakistan for sexual exploitation;

- Girls from Vietnam/Myanmar to Cambodia/Thailand for sexual exploitation;
- Girls from rural areas of Cambodia to urban centers for sexual exploitation;
- Girls from Laos to Thailand for domestic or factory work;
- Girls from Vietnam, Myanmar and North Korea for forced marriage in China;
- Boys from Myanmar to Thailand to work in the fishing industry; and
- Boys from Vietnam to China for illegal adoption (Ren, 2004; Sanghera, 2000; World Vision, 2006; UNICEF, 2009)

However, the trafficking of children from East and South-east Asia is increasingly directed outside the Asia region and includes the following pathways:

- Bangladesh and Pakistan to the United Arab Emirates (UNICEF, 2008);
- South Korea to the United States (Lee, 2005);
- Indonesia to Brunei, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria (UNICEF, 2009);
- Philippines to Costa Rica, New Zealand, the United States and Northern Mariana Islands, and
- Thailand to South Africa, Germany and Switzerland (UNICEF, 2009).

## **Factors**

- Experiences of violence or abuse
- Lack of education and life skills
- Lack of citizenship or personal documentation
- Feeling hopelessness
- Dropping out from schools
- Perception other countries or cities offer improvement of life
- Cultural context “belonging of their parents”
- Children are in relatively powerless positions
- Young girls are forced to marry for payment of a debt
- Fastest growing internet markets (to access and distribute child sexual abuse material, online sexual abuse)

- Growth of international tourist (sexual abuse by foreign)
- Supply and demand with regard to SEC
- Children in conflict zones
- Migrating and refugee children
- Minorities
- Children with disabilities
- Consumerism influenced by media and advertising for consumer goods

## **Demand**

Demand for cheap labour, young brides, sex with children and adoption drives the trafficking of children (UNICEF, 2009). Demand for child labour is driven by the fact that children are cheaper to employ, easier to manipulate and control, and unlikely to seek protection through industrial processes. They can be made to undertake undesirable work, such as in the Thai fishing industry or making bricks in Vietnam (UNICEF, 2009). Some forms of work are suited to children's smaller physical stature, for example, camel jockeys in the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf countries (UNICEF, 2008).

The demand for sex with children and/or young brides is largely attributed to the value placed on virginity among East Asian cultures. Demand from child sex offenders who often come from outside the region – usually from Western nations – because of the undersupply of girls and women available for marriage, fear of contracting HIV (UNICEF, 2009) and the belief that sex with young children or virgins can cure HIV (Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2002).

## **Child Sex Offenders**

- Asian men are more likely to sexually abuse young girls and to seek out young virgin girls (ECPAT International, 2017)
- Foreign child sex offenders constitute a significant problem and abuse boys and girls
- Child sex offenders are also in voluntary or professional position (teachers, orphanages, in NGOs)

## **International Instruments**

- CRC
- OPSC
- TOC
- PROTOCOL PALERMO
- ILO Convention 138
- ILO convention 182

## **Gaps and Challenges**

- Domestic legislation
- Extra-territorial legislation
- Incomplete or non-existing National Plan of Action (NPAs)
- Lack of cooperation, particularly with law enforcement agencies
- Lack of research and statistical information
- Impact of social norms, negative and discriminatory attitudes
- Weak criminal justice system
- Inadequate child protection system

# Children in Conflict Areas: Journeying Together with Forgotten Children

- Budi Soehardi

## A Brief History of Roslin House

It was started in 1999 when Budi (Singapore Airlines Pilot), Peggy and their three children were having a special evening to remember the 9 beautiful years they lived in Seoul, South Korea, when Budi was working and flying for Korean Airlines. They were celebrating by having a special dinner and also planning a family trip together to travel around the world, first class on Singapore Airlines. During that special dinner, the family had forgotten to turn off the TV which was usually turned off.

One of the TV programmes showed the life of the East Timor refugees living miserably and full of uncertainties. This contrast condition shown on TV made Budi and Peggy concerned about the innocent children who were living at the refugee camps. Long story short, Budi and Peggy decided to postpone their family holiday and changed it to a trip to visit and help those people who were shown on television living at the refugee camps.

That was how Budi, Peggy and their 3 children (Christine, Tassya and Christian) went to Timor Island for the first time as a family. For the trip, the family had decided to bring a load of love gifts and items especially for the innocent children living as refugees. It was a long and challenging journey to get to Kupang. There was a lot happening along the road and reaching the refugee camps was not easy. They knew nothing about how to go towards the camps, but with the help of a few pastors from a Catholic church, they were escorted to the refugee camps. It was great to see so many refugees being able to smile for a while as they were getting some items that the family really wanted to give them.

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*Budi Soehardi is the founder of Roslin Orphanage, Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.*

## **General Condition in East Nusa Tenggara**

East Nusa Tenggara province has the highest number of infant mortality, mothers' death on childbirth, also on stunting. Besides, malnutrition is threatening infants. Many babies are suffering from severe malnourishment. Access to education is very limited. The geographical condition is not helpful either. It is very difficult to get clean water and so, skin disease is very common. The soil there is a kind of rocky soil which is not suitable for cultivation and it is difficult to get water for irrigation system. People never planted anything before, and the land had been a big-sharp-thorny bush.

## **What We Build**

Despite the historical background of Timor, the children have the rights to live, to laugh and to love.

### **1. Education**

Our main purpose in Timor is to eliminate the poverty cycle through education. Therefore, going to school is mandatory. We launched a mobile library program in 2005 to stimulate reading awareness among local people and children. We tried to support local teachers as well by conducting 4-days course. Roslin school was built and opened in September 2013. We provide education and good food intake to the neighboring children.

### **2. Food source**

As mentioned above, the soil in Nusa Tenggara is not suitable for farming. Therefore, we worked together to clear the thorny land.

We removed the rocks and dug more and more. We acted as the medium for planting by separating the soil from rocks. Finally, we could provide food, not only for us, but also for the village children.

### **3. Strive for sustainability**

An orphanage must not be based on donations. Donations are bonus. We understand that we have to work hard to make Roslin self-sufficient in all aspects. Therefore, we initiated an



eco-village, where there will be a dorm for more children, schools and farm that they have to work on.

#### **4. Building a family**

Conflicts in the past might have separated us but everyone in our house is family. They became our family since the very first day they entered our house. We do everything together, and togetherness is our strength.

Doing all things works will not make us poorer. “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land.” (Isaiah 1:19). “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done.” (Proverbs 19:17, NIV).

# Early Childhood and Upholding Dignity

- Henderina Corry

Research has proven that children have extraordinary powers of mind, and possess the most ability to absorb information from birth to six. Maria Montessori described this period as “the absorbent mind”. Their minds are like sponges soaking up information unselectively. The child learns more in this period of life than any others do. During this age, Montessori found that the children have a sensitive period, the period where they learn certain things easily. Many other people name this period as the golden age.

## Prepared Environment

Maria Montessori introduced the concept of the prepared environment, which is designed in a particular way so that the child has the maximum chance for learning and exploration. The phrase ‘prepared environment’ refers to a well-thought out environment, classroom or home, designed with the child in mind. The goal of the prepared environment is to foster independence in the child. Adults are part of the environment.

There are some rules in the prepared environment:

- Freedom to move and to choose
- Structure and order
- Peers to learn from or with
- Concrete first
- Step by step presentation
- Help them to do it by themselves
- Observe and find their interest
- Encouragement, not reward and punishment

## **Introducing the Child to God**

- The family and teachers should introduce religious concept in a living model
- Have a family time every day where all the family members read the Bible, pray and worship together
- Parents/teachers have to have a strong bond with the children so that the children can learn love, kindness, and the present of the parents/teachers
- Reading the Bible stories with props wherever possible.
- Create a prayer corner
- See God in nature

## **Additional Notes**

- In Nepal, there are places in remote areas that children as young as 8 to 9 years old live in one house with other 40 people. There are no rooms separating the 5 married couples so the children see, hear and watch while the couples have their supposedly ‘private time’.
- In the Philippines, many progressive schools provide progressive early childhood care and development program. However, most of these schools are operated by private institutions that most poor families cannot afford. Many non-government organizations provide this kind of service.

However, in 2011 the government imposed mandatory kindergarten despite numerous issues on its ECCD program.

- Traumatic
- Overcrowded day care centers with at least 50 children
- sharing small and ill-ventilated learning spaces.
- We cannot meet the 1:20 ratio; some children sit on floor and it is even impossible to put a prayer corner. Some of the schools do not have CRs; there are cases where children pee their pants.
- At the same time, only colleges offer ECCD courses that’s why many teachers in the day care centers don’t have much background on education and there is no regular training being given to them.
- We are quite alarmed since this stage is very critical for the development of children.

# Child Rights Implementation: Challenges of Member States

- Yuyum Fhahni Paryani

## I. Overview

Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. 196 countries ratified the CRC. It consists fundamental principles: survival and development, non-discrimination, best interests of the child, views of the child, survival, development, protection and participation rights.

There are three optional protocols proposed:

- a. Sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography: 173 countries ( 9/10 AMS)
- b. Involvement of children in armed conflict: 166 countries (9/10 AMS)
- c. Communications / complaints procedure: 34 countries (1/10 AMS)

A body of 18 independent experts is involved in the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Their responsibility is to monitor the implementation by state parties. Then, they issue general comments to expound on some provisions of the CRC. As the concluding observation, each country is required to report on progress every five years. Challenges discussed in this report presentation are based on the most recent concluding observations by country (2007 to 2016).

## II. Common Challenges in AMS: Civil Rights & Freedoms

Every child has a right to own a name and nationality. Civil rights and freedoms are fundamental to realizing other rights. Birth registration is still an issue in some countries, even though there is an increase in birth registration process. Significant problems still exist in ensuring the registration of poor, migrant, and/or rural children. Some member states also still have restrictions on nationality

being passed on automatically to children when a foreign parent is involved.

Concerning freedoms, it includes freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It is required to have a mandatory religious education. On the other side, discrimination is still occurring, either discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities or discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

### **III. General Implementation Measures**

1. Standard of living and social spending. Millions of children still live in extreme poverty and there are continuing disparities in distribution of resources.

2. Comprehensive national action plans. Many countries do not have an action plan for children. Alternatively, if they have, then the plans do not cover all child rights and Convention areas. Besides, the problem is also lack of concrete implementation and monitoring strategies.

3. Data collection. More and better data has to be collected and it should be available for public. The data collected should not lump women and children together.

Consistently lacking:

- Complete, accurate, and disaggregated data
- Coordination among government agencies collecting data
- Data on sensitive/hidden issues – children with disabilities, VAC, sexual exploitation and child trafficking

4. Coordination. National bodies for coordinating child-related policies and programs lack adequate resources.

5. Awareness raising and training. The need for awareness raising across all AMS on the Convention among children and professionals is emerging. Training should be systematically delivered and sustainable.

6. Independent monitoring agencies and complaints mechanism. 5 out of 10 AMS agreed that they were lacking of independent

human rights institutions. Other problems are limited human and financial resources and civil and political rights; there are no special units for children even.

7. Relationships with CSOs/NGOs. The problems are limited participation in developing policies, programs and strategies. Besides, nascent child participation is low.

#### **IV. Survival and Development**

Every child has a right to health and health services and to education. The disparities on health and education vary within and between countries, but there are a number of similar concerns facing Southeast Asia.

##### **1. Common barriers in health and education**

- Budgetary allocations as a percentage of GDP are too low
- Shortage of qualified personnel – need adequate training
- Children in rural and remote areas, minority and Indigenous children, children with disabilities and children of migrants face discrimination and are less likely to access services.

##### **2. Child health indicators**

- Progress in vaccinations, infant mortality and malnutrition
- Ongoing disparities based on geography and wealth
- Prevalence of neonatal, infant and under-five mortality, chronic malnutrition, and preventable common diseases
- Low levels of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months in six member states

##### **3. Adolescent health needs**

- 350 million adolescents (10 to 19 years) in Southeast Asia (WHO estimate)
- Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education and services
- STIs and high rates of teenage pregnancies and abortions

- Some countries invest in HIV/AIDS prevention, but in others stigma including that against orphans prevail
- Women unaware on how to prevent HIV infection increase in number of women and children with HIV/AIDS
- Illicit drug use on the rise
- Lack of information on mental health services and the incidence of suicide

#### **4. Formal Education**

- Regional statistics don't tell whole story
- Concerns regarding access and quality of education, as well as retention
- Clear improvements - provision of free primary education
- Consistent barriers - families must pay additional costs (for uniforms and textbooks) even where primary education is free
- Low preschool attendance rates, lack of early childhood facilities
- Limited human rights education

#### **5. Technical and vocational training**

- New programs introduced
- General underfunding exists
- Enrollment rates low among minority groups

#### **6. Rest, leisure and artistic and cultural activities**

- Limited leisure, recreational and cultural activities
- Facilities for children of all ages, including playgrounds and sports facilities

### **V. Protection**

#### **1. Violence Against Children**

- Every child has the right not to be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

- Corporal punishment must therefore be prohibited everywhere
- Corporal punishment in schools has been prohibited in nine member states
- Even where legislation has been brought in to limit or prohibit corporal punishment, societal attitudes enable continuance

## **2. Family care**

- Need parenting support to assist with childrearing and childcare, especially for low income parents, single parents and parents in rural and remote areas
- Develop parenting skills instead of referring children to the authorities/institutions
- Migration

## **3. Domestic violence and abuse**

- Widespread nature of domestic violence against women and children
- Lack of gender and child-sensitive reporting mechanisms
- Lack of mandatory reporting among professionals
- Abuse is socially accepted in some countries and taboo in others
- Under-reporting or reporting does not result in appropriate responses

## **4. Foster care and institutionalization**

- Institutionalization and detention as a last resort and for the shortest duration possible
- Institutionalization remains common in reality
- Children in conflict with the law within adult detention
- Guidelines on alternative care exist but implementation is inadequate
- Many countries lack adequate oversight
- Reports of physical and sexual abuse and neglect



## **5. Adoption**

- Steps taken to reduce and better regulate inter-country adoption
- Some countries lack safeguards
- Five member states have not ratified Hague Adoption Convention

## **6. Child Labour**

- Remains prevalent in the region, including the worst forms of hazardous work
- Labour conventions and laws are lacking enforcement
- Legal frameworks for regulating businesses are weak
- Oversight is even more limited in the informal sector (domestic work, agriculture)
- Particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Some countries have a minimum age of work below the compulsory schooling age such that children may be employed without finishing schooling,
- The compulsory schooling age is below the minimum age of work such that children who don't want to continue schooling after the compulsory years start working before legally able to do so

## **7. Child trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation**

- Many Southeast Asian states are source, transit and/or destination countries
- Women and children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation
- Lacking systems for detecting victims and adequate rehabilitation and reintegration support

## **8. Sexual violence and exploitation**

- Children recruited for prostitution and pornography, including online
- Legal protection and prosecution remains weak
- Child victims are often treated as criminals
- Children on the street and children living in poverty are especially vulnerable

## **9. Administration of juvenile justice**

- Some countries lack a comprehensive juvenile justice system or specialized courts or judges
- Training for justice and social welfare professionals needs to be improved
- Even where separate juvenile justice systems exist, older children (for example, those above 16) including those with intellectual disabilities may be tried as adults
- Caning, whipping and other inhuman forms of punishment

## **10. Detention**

- Adults in poor conditions and social reintegration measures lacking
- Children of detained mothers
- Children in immigration detention centers

## **11. Children with disabilities**

- CRPD ratified by all member states
- Widespread stigma and discrimination
- Barriers to education, social, and public services
- Lack of disaggregated data

## **12. Migrant children**

- Relatively overlooked due to the bilateral and regional nature
- Increased cooperation needed to avoid statelessness
- Limited education and training programs for frontline immigration and border service agents

## **13. The girl child**

- Discrimination due to societal attitudes and sometimes laws
- Stereotypical attitudes on the roles of women and girls
- Sexual violence is prevalent
- Sex tourism, female genital mutilation and child marriage continue

## **VI. Commitments on Children : Regional Mechanisms**

- ASEAN Charter
- Declaration of Principles to Strengthen ASEAN Collaboration on Youth (1983)
- Kuala Lumpur Agenda on ASEAN Youth Development (1997)
- Declaration on the Commitments for Children in ASEAN 2001
- Hanoi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010)
- ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children
- ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons particularly Women and Children (2004)
- ASEAN Declaration on strengthening Social Protection (2013)
- ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of VAC and VAW
- ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons especially women and children
- ASEAN Guidelines for Child Victims of Trafficking
- ASEAN Guidelines on non violent approach to nurture, care and development of children in all settings
- ASEAN ECCD Guidelines
- ASEAN Child Protection Systems Baseline Study (ongoing)
- ASEAN Baseline study on Child participation (ongoing)
- ASEAN declaration on Out of School children
- ASEAN-UNICEF Joint Nutrition report and proposed declaration on nutrition
- ASEAN Declaration Online Children Sexual Exploitation (ongoing)
- ASEAN Regional Guidelines on Violence against Women and Girls Data Collection and Use
- ASEAN Guidelines and Procedures to Address the Needs of TIP Victims in accordance with ACTIP (ongoing)

# Upholding the Dignity of Children: Biblical Theological Perspectives

- Rosiana Indah Purnomo

## Mark 10: 13-16

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

## Introduction

Studies and researches have shown that children still suffer from unjust treatment from society. We still hear stories of children who are victims of poverty, violence, bullying, trafficking, and discrimination. In recent times, with advancements in digitalization, parents tend to let gadgets nurture their children. This leads to neglectful parenting and lack of attachment between parents and children. In fact, we adults may really understand the importance of childhood stage in life.

If we look back to the context and time when this passage was quoted, both the Palestinian Jewish society and the Greco-Roman world were patriarchal. In the broad Hellenistic context of the first century, children were seen alternately as a blessing or a burden. Yet, there is a notable difference in the specific Jewish context. Jewish law prohibited both abortion and exposure. The responsibilities of raising one's children in line with Jewish law were very important for the whole community. With this responsibility, however, came a very

strict relationship between adults and children, with children being almost powerless under their parents' absolute authority.

Let us explore the Gospel of Mark, especially chapter 10 verse 13-16 to see how Jesus upholds the dignity of children.

## **Exploration of Mark 10: 13-16**

### **1. The role of adults (v. 13a)**

People were bringing little children to Jesus. The Greek word used here is *prosphéro*. *Prosphéro* means to bring, offer or present, which is also used to explain how the people brought those who were ill to Jesus to be healed (Mt.4:24; 9:2, 32). *Prosphéro* also means to bring (the children) for dedication. It was also a tradition in NT to bring children to a Rabbi to be blessed.

*Prosphéro* is an active verb done by the 3rd person. This shows the responsibility of adults (parents, teachers, pastors, etc.), to bring the children in order to get the touch of blessing or healing. The touch of blessing and healing of Jesus would bring good condition or even prosperity as it was in recognition of divine benefits, and it was not only physical, but also all aspects of a child. This implies that the children need adults' initiative and accompaniment to reach their wholeness and fullness of life.

### **2. Disciples' response (v.13b)**

However, not every adult is aware of his/her responsibility. Jesus' disciples rebuked the people bringing the little children. The disciples were people who were close to Jesus. They even listened to His teachings, and moreover in the previous chapter Jesus said, "If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea." (Mark 9:42). Despite this, they were the ones rebuking the people and the little children.

There are some assumptions as to why the disciples did so:

- They thought the children would be a disturbance for Jesus. They had been journeying from Capernaum to Perea. They might have been tired and wanted some rest.
- They thought children were not an important part of Jesus' ministry, so they belittled and disparaged the children.
- They did not have their concerns extend to children.

From the disciples we learn that it is not merely because of children, but that adults can be barriers too, either blocking the way or failing to provide the children with one.

### **3. Jesus' response (v.14)**

Among other Gospels, Mark stated clearly how emotional Jesus was. He was indignant because of the disciples' act.

Jesus spoke up and asked to let the children come to Him; He upheld the children by saying "...for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." Children are seen as weak, powerless, vulnerable, even considered as the least one, but Jesus saw beyond that. Children have certain unique qualities and therefore Jesus said that the kingdom of God be longs to those who have the qualities of children.

### **4. Jesus upholds the children's dignity (v.16)**

Jesus took a leap. He wasn't merely let the children come to Him; He took them in His arms, placed His hands on them and blessed them. By this, Jesus showed that He accepts the children into His community and adopts them into His family; He even blessed the children with the inheritance of His kingdom. Jesus acknowledged the existence of children, embraced them, and treated them with dignity and as part of the society.

His actions embody the dynamic of God's kingdom: welcoming and blessing the children epitomizes God's gracious reception of the least, vulnerable and needy.

## **Conclusion and Reflection**

Jesus never lets anyone belittle the children. Children are as valued as adults, perhaps even more than adults as Jesus values the Kingdom of God to such as those.

Let us see ourselves, our community and church when we are addressing children's issues.

1. How have we dealt with children's rights and dignity so far?  
Did we block the children, or did we fail to provide the way?
2. What is your commitment from now on?

# Justice for Children of God

- Ali'itasi Aoina Salosa

This passage in Isaiah shows God speaking into the pain of exile and God's desire to send a servant who will bring about justice, not only for Israel but also to all nations.

This chapter of the Servant Songs brings us in at the middle of the story of God's people - Israel's deliverance, covenant, monarchy, exile and return.

## Background

God delivers Israel from bondage in Egypt, makes a covenant with them, and brings them through the wilderness into the land of Canaan. They become a nation and build a temple for the Lord. For centuries they prosper and then the unthinkable happens.

The Babylonians defeat Israel. They destroy the temple, plunder Israel's treasure and livelihoods, take them into bondage, and march them back to the gates of Babylon in chains, prompting "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion" (Psalm 137:1). The Babylonian victory over Israel was absolute. This was utter, complete devastation of the political, social, economic and religious life of God's people.

Israel may well have asked, "How could God allow this to happen to his children? Had God abandoned his children? Removed from access to the Temple and to the land, were they still God's people? Was God still God?" In exile they could only conclude that God had withdrawn God's favour and allowed the Babylonians to punish them for their sins and disobedience.

Into this identity crisis, Isaiah speaks a word. The prophet reminds the people who God is and how God works. He draws

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their attention from this particular, historical moment, to the larger purposes of God. As Isaiah speaks, it's as though we see the camera lens zooming slowly out from a close-up shot to a wide-angle view, a cosmic view. By reminding Israel of who God is, how God works, and what God is doing by sending a servant, Isaiah expands the frame of reference, re-locating and purposing Israel's particularity within God's cosmic frame.

## **Biblical Reflection**

God is the God not of Israel only or even of Babylon, but the one who “created the heavens . . . and stretched out the earth” (verse 5). This is the God of creation, who made everything that is, and who dwells in this wide, open cosmic space, not contained by the cramped space of exile. This is the God “who gives breath to the people upon [the earth] and spirit to those who walk on it” (verse 5). God's breath animates not only the people of Israel, but every living, breathing creature on the planet. And finally, this is also the God who has reached out to create the particular people called Israel, to call them to righteousness, and to keep them (verse 6). This is the God of the expansive universe and the God of these very particular people, all are children of God.

Isaiah proclaims this God acts in particular ways. First, God sends a spirit-filled servant not a conqueror or tyrant -- (“a bruised reed he will not break,” verse 3). This agent of God is a liberator who will bring justice, not domination.

Second, God works to bring justice “in the earth,” that is, to bring it to all, everywhere. God sends this servant to persevere until justice is done all the way “to the coastlands” (verse 4).

Third, God purposes God's people, to be “a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (verses 6-7). God calls them to righteousness not for themselves alone, but for the nations. Isaiah reminds this exiled people that God has not abandoned them but is indeed at work among them, restoring them to be a blessing.

This is good news! God is still God. God's people are still God's people in their particularity, yet with a purpose that extends beyond themselves to all the earth.

Rather Isaiah shifts Israel's gaze here from themselves back to the wide casting of God's promise and plan. The horizon of possibility is no longer the hand in front of my face but the very edge of the earth's curvature. A roomy expanse for God to "declare new things" that "spring forth" (verse 9). This is a vision that is full of future.

The pattern of servanthood continues from Isaiah to Matthew. In Jesus, God again sends a servant who will bring justice, who God "anoints to bring good news to the poor . . . proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and declare the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

As God spoke into the exilic crisis to Israel, God continues to speak into the crisis here in Asia. God continues to speak through your effort and your struggle and your work to bring about justice for children throughout Asia. We are the servants God calls and calls and calls us to rise up each day ... to place our hands around the smouldering wicks and bruised reeds of our children and be seen to do justice and right by them. In faithfulness God will bring justice so be encouraged. Do not falter or be discouraged; God will take you by the hand, will hold you up and bring about a covenant of promise and hope through you and your service to our children.

# **Reports from Workshops**

## **Group I**

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Building Coalitions and Networks**

We see the need for churches to participate in national/regional alliances and networks to further strengthen the responses in promoting and upholding the rights of children. The meaningful participation of children in the whole process of network building must be of utmost priority.

### **Workshop 2**

#### **Ecumenical Advocacy Action**

Churches can be very influential in proclaiming messages that promote children's rights through writing position paper/statement, lobby work with the government, signature campaigns, social media campaigns, candle lighting activities and protest rallies. We recognize that advocacy work is an integral part in getting the message across to all, and in putting pressure on the government to address issues like child labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, killings, children refugees, etc.

#### **Proposed Action Plans:**

1. Enact child protection policy that affirms and upholds the dignity and rights of child.
2. Develop human rights based curriculum for church education that promotes increasing awareness of rights of children
3. Formulate and develop programs for children including the provision of direct services (health, education, alternative care and shelter, among others)
4. Write appeals or statements, and participate in mobilizations or collective actions that demand the government to act on issues concerning children.

## **Group II**

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Building Coalitions and Networks**

1. Propose practical suggestions
  - 1.1. Churches (Synods/Christian Organizations) to be gathered in the spirit 'for the best interest of children' through:
    - a. The forming and/or strengthening of child friendly program within each respective churches (e.g. dissemination of the NCRC, legal aid to child victim, child witness and child in conflict with the law);
    - b. Action Plan from each Churches on Child-related issues with in the Churches, thus also to explore the possibility of inter-faith cooperation and/or civil society organizations outside the Church;
  - 1.2. Report sharing among the Churches member of Christian Conference of Asia on the implementation of programs that have been formed by each Church member (Synods/Christian Organizations) through:
    - a. Report on child-friendly program that has been implemented and/or ongoing project to be shared (best practices, challenges, etc.)
    - b. Report on training for child-friendly program within the Church and the possibility to conduct regional training among the members of CCA (e.g. Safe Church program Training by the Uniting Church in Australia)
2. Identifying National & Regional Organizations for mutual collaboration & advocacy.

Concerning the fact that in terms of ASEAN member countries, Christian population is small in the predominant non-Christian ASEAN countries (such as: Indonesia 10 %, Thailand

1%, Myanmar 6.2%), Churches must participate in governmental child-related programs through all channels available (e.g. cooperation with related Ministries, initiate a pilot project originating from the Church itself to participate in government programs, thus to voice the Church as ‘1st class citizen’ in supporting government program e.g. providing high-standard Christian-based education, providing integrated center for child-related issues (Psychologist, Advocate, Doctors, Teachers, etc))

## **Workshop 2**

### **Ecumenical Advocacy Action**

1. Engaging advocacy initiatives at governmental and inter-governmental levels in national & regional context: In terms of this topic, our group categorized the access to engage advocacy initiatives at governmental level to 3 (three) group of access:

- **Easy Access**

In terms of the Australian & New Zealand experience on Church’s advocacy initiatives, at the National level it is through the collaboration with the Royal Commission that acts as an ad hoc formal public inquiry into specified issues (e.g. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013-2017), Child Protection Systems Royal Commission (2014–2016) investigating the effectiveness of the child protection systems that are currently in place, Royal Commission into Family Violence (2015–2016))

In terms of the Taiwan experience, through its representative in this Consultation Meeting (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan), it was informed that the access to church’s initiative in National level is accommodated through its representative that has a seat in the Taiwanese Congress (consider the fact that Christian population in Taiwan is comprised at 4,5 % of the population);

- **Moderate Access**

In terms of Rep. of Indonesia experience, the access for Church’s initiative at the National level is regulated in Art. 25

(1) & (2) of Law No. 35/2014 on Child Protection that states, “The community actively participates in Child Protection in involving community organization, academia, and related stake holder.”

- Hard Access

In terms of the Philippines experience, the current administration is considered to be not child-friendly, where there’s growing trend of lesser safe spaces for children, and above all the Church is having difficult relations in terms of communicating with the government.

2. Issues & Concerns to be Addressed for advocacy & to identify priority areas
  - Migration & Child Trafficking (Shared experience from Australia (refugees) & Thailand (children that have been trafficked from neighboring countries who are being exploited as beggar, child prostitute, etc.)
  - Same gender marriage (Shared experience from Australia on the challenge to the Church in Australia on this issue)
  - Children in LGBTQ community
  - Juvenile Justice System (Shared experience from Indonesia on how the Church must be pro-active in participating as active stakeholders in every angle of the Juvenile Justice System)
  - Eradication of Drug abuse (Love Life Community experience of Rev. Etha from GKI di Tanah Papua on combatting drug abuse in Papua through the ‘dancing’ children community, where she gathered children that had interest in dancing activity in order to hinder children from bad influence of the society)
  - Enhancing the existing ‘high-standard’ Christian education (Shared experience in ASEAN region countries: Indonesia, Thailand & Myanmar)

## **Group III**

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Building Coalitions and Networks**

1. Find the organisations who handle the issue of children rights .
2. Try to communicate with them and get some information about their work (seminar, conference, etc)
3. Try to involve in their work.

### **Workshop 2**

#### **Ecumenical Advocacy Action**

1. It's important to start with what we have. So to do the advocacy we can start by sharing our experiences for the people.
2. Most of the people doing the conference about children do so without inviting them to attend.

#### **Recommendation**

Inviting children to participate in each meeting about them, to shout their opinion , to let them speak without judging, to start believing and accepting them, because when we start to believe in them and they are able to hear their own voice, who knows they might be the ones who will strengthen us.

## Group IV

- Practical Suggestions

From our discussion we can outline that building coalitions and networks should not be limited only among civil society organizations and faith-based groups. We must include state agencies or governments to make real progress in dealing with children rights and dignity. However, we have to emphasize on “working with” the government and not “working for” the government to keep the autonomy and objectivity of such civil society organizations or faith-based groups. We don’t want the government to dictate us on how we should run our approach and strategy dealing with children rights.

The problem is that working side by side with the government works better in some countries but might be a problem in other countries. From our discussion, we know that building a coalition with the government works better in Indonesia than in India. This is the result of a far more complex problem in India compared to Indonesia. For one thing, Indonesia does not have to deal with children of refugees, migrants, and stateless people from its neighboring country as India does.

In Bali, Indonesia, Rev. I Gusti Putu Suarjana initiated a regular meeting and discussion with local state agency exchanging child protection program and set up a shelter or safe house called “rumah ramah anak” for abandoned children. They even provide a psychiatrist for children with psychiatric disorders.

In Toraja, South Sulawesi, one of Indonesian province, Rev. Elianus Samben, working side by side with district attorney and other law enforcement officers, engages in advocacy for children with legal problem whether a victim or a culprit. They go even further in helping children after the criminal justice process by educating and preparing them to go back to society in the aftermath.



National and regional organizations for mutual collaborations and advocacy. In Indonesia there are a lot of organizations specialized in children protection such as Indonesian Children Protection Commission (KPAI), founded in 2002 and funded by the government but with independent nature. National Commission of Children Protection is another regional organization for advocacy founded by private legal advocate Aris Merdeka Sirait and is well known in Jakarta region.

Engage in initiatives at governmental and intergovernmental levels at national and regional level

In any given country, one door integrated service in dealing with children protection should start from the protection policy, mitigation process and the recovery of children dealing with difficulty.

Issues and concern to be addressed for advocacy and priority areas

In Indonesia, based on Independent central statistics agency, poverty contributes below 10 percent of Indonesia population which translates to around 25 million people in 2018. This contributes to the number of children whose needs are not fulfilled whether physically, mentally, spiritually, or mentally which is around 3-4 million. Indonesians call-them “anak terlantar” which includes child labour, causalities of domestic violence, physical and mental abuse, family breakdown, sex exploitation and many more. The number of street children has decreased significantly from 232.894 children in 2006 to 33.400 children in 2015 though.

In India, based on Mathews George Chunakara’s paper, the number of street children is around 18 million.

To summarize our discussion: We propose that we must include state agency or government to make real progress in dealing with children rights and dignity.

## **Asia Regional Consultation on 'Upholding Rights and Dignity of Children'**

### ***Communiqué***

Children are precious gifts of God. Childhood needs special attention and it holds a special place in everyone's life as early childhood is the time that the foundation of life is built. Children need to be physically and mentally healthy, and protected from harm; they should be surrounded by love and care, and helped to blossom into their life with dignity. However, the fact remains that millions of children in today's world have no opportunity to develop and grow to their fullest.

We affirm that children are created in the Image of God; they are our present as well as future. Children are in our midst to reveal God's grand design and plan in our lives. They are signs to the Kingdom of God and heirs of God's new order. Therefore, any discrimination against children is against the will of God, values of God's kingdom and the teachings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The consultation organised by the Christian Conference of Asia and hosted by the Gereja Protestan di Indonesia Bagian Barat (GPIB) from 16 to 20 September 2018 had objectives to sensitise the Asian churches to be aware of the rights and dignity of children; to address specific concerns and issues related to the rights and dignity of children; enhance the capacity of Asian churches to be engaged in advocacy on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of children; and find ways to build networking of Asian churches and ecumenical organisations to uphold the rights and dignity of children.

The issues raised during the deliberations of the consultation included challenges to child protection in a digitalized world; children in conflict situations; situations of child labour; implementation of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and subsequent guidelines in Asia today; ending violence against children; early childhood development; and trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Asia. The participants shared stories and experiences

from different parts of Asia. Millions of children continue to be victims of the most egregious forms of exploitations such as violence, abuse and neglect. Poverty, sexual exploitation, sale and trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, pornography and forced labour have become serious concerns in several Asian countries. Impoverished children who are forced to live in vulnerable situations continue to face many inhuman and degrading experiences. Ethnic, religious, political and communal conflicts affect millions of Asian children. The impacts of digitalisation in all walks of life affect children negatively despite the many positive gains of technological advancements. Access to basic education, health care and essential factors needed to nurture and develop the talents of the future generation are limited in many situations. These factors continue to affect the protection and security of children, and their right to live with dignity in a secure atmosphere.

The experiences shared by several participants outlined the problems affecting the dignity and rights of children in manifold ways such as an escalation in the number of street children due to increasing poverty, the break-up of traditional patterns of social and economic life, family disruption, and the inability or unwillingness of the government to respond to the well-being of the people; ethnic and communal conflicts, religious violence, high susceptibility to natural hazards and internal displacements; prevalence of trafficking of children for slavery and labour in different forms; sexual exploitation including child prostitution, child pornography in countries such as Cambodia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia that have become a safe haven for paedophiles to avoid easy detection of their activities.

We shared during workshop sessions about finding ways to build coalitions and networks for effective advocacy on upholding and protecting children's rights and dignity. The current situation in Asia identified common issues and also possible actions to address various contexts. In this situation, it is our firm conviction that sharing of experiences and resources as well as collaboration on addressing emerging issues help churches in Asia to work together for the dignity and rights of children. The participants propose for actions by churches to continue to develop systematic efforts in upholding the dignity and protecting the rights of children.

## Call to Action

### The Asia Regional Consultation

- *Urges* churches and ecumenical councils in Asia to initiate advocacy to influence governments;
- *Requests* CCA to initiate and facilitate an Asian ecumenical network on upholding and protecting dignity and rights of children;
- *Encourages* churches in developing policies of participation of children as an utmost priority, especially through Christian education programmes;
- *Urges* churches to be engaged in tactical action with governments, civil society organisations, faith-based networks and seek professional assistance as well as pool together resources within the churches to deal with juvenile justice system, issues of sexuality, drug abuse, etc.;
- *Recommends* Churches in Asia to develop curriculum for Child Protection training, and initiate pilot projects to understand state legislations of child protection measures and mechanisms
- *Suggests* churches to initiate training of the trainers for developing and implementing best practices for child protection as well as to form children-friendly organisations and networks with an aim to sensitise churches on issues and international instruments to protect children's rights and dignity;
- *Proposes* churches in Asia to create awareness among parents and children about the negative impacts of digitalised world;
- *Encourages* church initiatives to develop Child-friendly/Rights-based programmes in local congregations.

We affirm that the desire for life in all its richness and fullness is the most powerful instinct in human beings. As we believe

that human dignity is God's claim on human beings, it is not something created by human declarations. Therefore, human dignity requires human rights for its embodiment, protection and blossoming of life in all its fullness. Churches in Asia are called to be engaged in participating in God's mission and prophetic witness of upholding and protecting the dignity and rights of children.

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