



South Asia Initiative To End Violence Against Children



NEWS RELEASE

Expert Committee Consultation on Child Protection of the Central Monastic Body in Bhutan ends on a positive note to advance alternative care practices



Organized by the Child Protection Office of the Central Monastic Body with support from the SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat (South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children) in Kathmandu, Nepal, the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), Royal Government of Bhutan, UNICEF Bhutan and the South Asia Co-ordinating Group on Action against Violence against Children (SACG), a two day Consultation on Child Protection of the Central Monastic Body ended on a positive note. The Consultation was aimed at reviewing the child protection system of the Monastic Body to document the system as a good practice promoting alternative forms of discipline away from corporal punishment as well as to assess the current status of the 11 Expert Committee and to chart out a way forward to strengthen the child protection system in the Monastic Body

The inaugural ceremony was addressed by the Chief Guest Lopen Gembo Dorji, General Secretary of the Central Monastic Body, Dr. Rinchen Chopel, the Director General of SAIEVAC Secretariat and Lopen Ugyen Penjor, the Chairperson of the Expert Committee on Child Protection of the Central Monastic Body in Bhutan.

In his inaugural address, the Chief Guest while reminding on the importance of auspicious motivation said... " it is now even more important for all concerned stakeholders and partners to work in concert to meet the needs of children, in particular of the young monks and nuns in the monastic institutions in Bhutan". The Director General of SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat also re-iterated by saying...."with the positive policy environment in place, it is now an absolute pre-requisite to plan and prepare a do-able "way forward" because the initiative have a potential to be an exemplary best practice of alternative positive discipline in the region".

The consultation was organized to discuss and document the child protection system in the central Monastic Body of Bhutan with specific reference to the protection of children from corporal punishment. Discussions were held to explore the monitoring mechanism for child protection in the Monastic System along with the challenges and lessons learned. The consultation was also effective in identifying and adopting the alternative forms of discipline and priority actions for the future to end corporal punishment.

One of the key highlight that was unanimously acknowledged by the Consultation was the momentum that SAIEVAC Regional Secretariat and its partners has been able to maintain in the initiative to institutionalise an alternative care practice to young monks and nuns in the monastic education system based on the principles of child rights as enunciated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other regional instruments.

All the eleven Expert Committee members and representaives on Child Protection of the Central Monastic Body and representatives from the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), Bhutan SAIEVAC Mechanism, participated and shared a situational update, experiences, progress, lessons and challenges confronted by the initiative.

There is now a clear understanding of the need to adopt non violent alternative forms of discipline in the monastic system in conformity with the UNCRC and other positive discipline requirements, along with the needed policy commitment from the highest level. in the religious community. The concomitant need of an institutional mechanisms is also found to be in place for taking the initiative forward.

Some of the "way forward" actions discussed and agreed upon were:

1. To review/reinforce the policy directive, composition and mandates of the 11 Expert Committee on Child Protection in the Monastic system;
2. Revisit the Terms of Reference of the Expert Committee;
3. Establish Rules and Procedures for operational functions;
4. Create an instituonal system to undertake functional responsibilities with time-bound milestones and deliverables;
5. Develop skills of the 11 Expert Committee on "Rights and Responsibilities", "Techniques and Tools for Positive Discipline/Alternative forms of discipline", "Counselling" and "Resource Mobilization techniques";
6. Develop monitoring and evaluation tools with clearly defined objectives, outputs and outcomes;
7. Document and disseminate guidelines and information;
8. Establish a strategic complaints and response mechanism for violence against children and sensitise thereto;
9. Define the institutional mandate, roles and responsibilities of the Child Care and Protection Office;
10. Establish an organizational structure with a clearly defined job descriptions along with well articulated organic linkages to the policy guidelines and the Expert Committee;
11. Develop a long term organizational plan and implementation strategy.

In order to pursue the above “way forward”, it was agreed to discuss and confirm the next fullfledged Meeting of the 11 Expert Committee members on Child Protection of the Central Monastic Body from 3-4 July 2014 in Paro, Bhutan.

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