



# Child Rights Coalition Asia

## **I. Background Information of the Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia)**

The Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia) is a regional network of children's rights and human rights organizations with the main objective to mainstream the children's rights perspectives and agenda into the regional and international advocacy processes. CRC Asia was brought into fruition as a result of support provided by Save the Children Sweden to national and regional children's rights civil society organizations that have expressed and pursued interest to engage in advocacy work within ASEAN.

The network was created on 25 November 2008 and is being supported by Save the Children Sweden.

Working within a framework of equality, mutual respect and non-discrimination, CRC Asia seeks to enable civil society to effectively advocate for the promotion and protection of children's rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) and its Optional Protocols are held as the basic standards of the entitlements and freedoms of all children, and these serve as the foundation of the work of the CRC Asia.

CRC Asia strives towards the following goals:

1. Meaningful participation of children on issues that concern them;
2. Strong regional and global advocacy which is grounded on and reinforces national civil society initiatives;
3. Strong regional and global advocacy which holds national governments accountable for their obligations as articulated in the UNCRC;
4. The promotion and protection of children's rights in ASEAN and other regional mechanisms.

CRC Asia is regional network to enhance civil society cooperation with an end view of strengthening broad-based children's rights advocacy. Its objectives are as follows:

1. Identify and develop common positions across thematic and sectoral issues that have implication on children's rights;
2. Promote children's rights perspectives within the discourse and agenda of various thematic and sectoral concerns;
3. Enhance children's rights analysis to inform and help improve the advocacies and actions of various thematic and sectoral concerns;
4. Engage government and other duty bearers with an end view of promoting and ensuring accountability.

Since 2008, CRC Asia has done advocacy work focusing on ASEAN together with other civil society groups that are part of the Solidarity of Asian People's Advocacies Task Force on ASEAN and Human Rights (SAPA-TFAHR). CRC Asia works as the child rights focal point of the SAPA-TFAHR.

The following are the previous activities of CRC Asia in line with recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children:

### *Enhancing the capacity of all who work with and for children*

CRC Asia has invested resources in developing capacities of child rights organizations in monitoring and reporting child rights. In 22 to 25 August 2011, CRC Asia organized a Regional Workshop in Engaging the UN Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review. This is a measure build NGO's capacities to access redress mechanisms in ensuring child rights compliance of states. In

addition, CRC Asia has been active in the advocacy towards the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure. In 15 to 16 December 2011, CRC Asia organized the Regional Roundtable Discussion on Violence Against Children in order to generate common understanding of the definition and manifestations of VAC amongst child rights organizations, and to coordinate a regional advocacy strategy around the said issue. Currently, CRC Asia is building a regional database of child rights experts who the Asian region to facilitate referrals and cross-country exchange of technical expertise.

#### *Ensure Participation of Children*

CRC Asia has supported advocacy and training activities of children partners in several countries. In the Philippines, a group of children in Negros Occidental have conducted community-based child rights education and dissemination in 5 municipalities. In Indonesia, children from North Sumatra and Aceh were given a training on enhance their awareness of the UN CRC and ASEAN's role, and children from Jakarta have started using social media in reporting bullying in various settings. In May 2011, CRC Asia supported a group of children in drafting and submitting a statement to ASEAN expressing their views about child rights situation in the region.

CRC Asia's membership is composed of the following organizations:

#### China/Hong Kong

- Hong Kong Committee for Children's Rights (HKCCR)

#### Indonesia

- Children's Human Rights Foundation
- Yayasan SEJIWA
- Yayasan KKSP - Education and Information Centre for Child Rights
- Sahabat Perempuan dan Anak Indonesia (SAPA Indonesia)

#### Philippines

- Mindanao Action Group for Children's Rights and Protection (MAG-CRP)

#### Malaysia

- Protect and Save the Children (P.S. The Children)

#### Myanmar

- Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB)
- UNITED Acts

#### Thailand

- The Life Skills Development Foundation (TLSDF)

#### Vietnam

- Vietnam Association for the Protection of Children's Rights (VAPCR)
- Centre for Research and Support for Vietnamese Children (CENFORCHIL)
- Paradise for Children Network (PCNet)
- Institute of Social Studies (ISS)

#### Regional

- Southeast Asia Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (SEASUCS)
- Save the Children Sweden – Southeast Asia and Pacific Regional Office
- Terre des Hommes Germany in Southeast Asia
- NGO Advisory Committee on the Follow-up of the UN Study on Violence Against Children

## **II. Submission to ACWC**

### **Background**

As a contribution to the promote the implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 UN Study on Violence Against Children, representatives from civil society organizations from 8 countries in Southeast Asia met to discuss the extent of violence against children in the Southeast and East Asian region, to describe the existing challenges faced by stakeholders in addressing VAC and to generate recommendations for policy and programmatic actions addressed to states and to ASEAN.

Based on the sharing of the participants, the following are the challenges realized in pursuing actions and programmes to address VAC at country and regional levels. First, there remains to be a low political commitment among member states in addressing VAC. There are few countries that have developed comprehensive national plans of action in addressing VAC. Existing national plans of action in addressing child rights remain to be fragmented, disconnected or issue based. Such absence of a national plan of action limits states from pursuing national legislations that provide a common definition of violence against children. Allocation of resources to enhance the work of institutions and the capabilities of state actors such as professional law enforces, social workers and other duty bearers entrusted to facilitate recovery and reintegration of children remain to be limited. In countries where services related to child protection and social welfare have been decentralized or devolved, application of child rights standards tend to be inconsistent and is highly dependent on the political will and priorities of local government officials.

Another challenge faced is societal perception and attitude that legitimizes certain forms of violence against children. The 2006 UN Study on Violence Against Children clearly indicates that all forms of violence cannot be justified and the same position has been reiterated in the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment No. 13. Corporal punishment, which has physical and emotional repercussions towards children, is framed as a way to discipline children. Government, parents and school officials in many countries argue that corporal punishment is deeply ingrained in tradition and local customs that are necessary for the upbringing of children. Certain countries have likewise made corporal punishment lawful towards children, especially for boys who are in conflict with the law, who are in state custody or those in institutions of care. Many countries in the region have also neglected bullying or other forms violence committed by a child against another child in legislations and programmes.

Another challenge faced is the prevailing culture of impunity across many countries in the region. This hinders children from seeking justice or redress. Specific vulnerabilities are faced by children on the move, including victims of trafficking and undocumented migrant children, who, by virtue of being non-citizens in the destination countries, are denied access to support from the government of destination countries. Children living in refugee camps are subjected to child protection standards that are not consistent with the host country's laws or with international standards. The culture of impunity is also aggravated by the lack of complaints receiving mechanisms, such as hotlines and children's ombudspersons that are accessible to all children.

Another challenge faced is that monitoring systems, whether by state or civil society, tends to be fragmented, where efforts are focused on certain child rights issues, weak in terms of information reliability, where many information gathered are anecdotal, and limited in terms of geographic scope. The absence of clear policy and definition of violence against children in many countries have also implications on the monitoring and documentation work whereby information gathered are categorized under overlapping set of categories based on the groups of children who experience violence or the types of violence faced.

Another challenge faced are biases and discrimination against children belonging to specific marginalized groups and identities including disability, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation. Children in conflict with the law come from economically marginalized families and

communities. Marginalization of certain groups manifests in terms of stereotyping and discrimination of children, denial of access to basic rights such as to education, as well as non-provision of support and protection measures.

Another challenge faced is the need to enhance child participation in development and implementation of plans and programmes to address violence against children. Through actions of children's groups in many countries, children have been involving in reporting cases, advocacy through various media and involvement in program formulation. However, these examples of child participation tend to be event-specific or issue-specific and in many instances the results are not taken into consideration in decision-making. Country child participation frameworks that guide government actors in mainstreaming child participation in governance are non-existent in many countries.

## **Recommendations**

ASEAN should declare and come up with measures transforming the region into a "safe neighbourhood for all children". As a principle, the ACWC should ensure that all children should receive adequate protection for their rights and well-being. In addition, measures to prevent VAC should be given priority.

The following are recommendations submitted to governments and the ACWC as inputs in developing a regional programme in addressing VAC:

### **Enhancing political commitment**

1. Ensure the ratification of the three Optional Protocols of the UN CRC by member states;
2. Review and consider the withdrawal of existing reservations or declarations that limit states full compliance to the UN CRC;
3. Review all treaties ratified by member states, including those pertinent to immigration and trade, and ensure that these are applied to the best interest of the child;
4. Work towards the transformation of traditions and cultural practices that are harmful to children;
5. Allocation of adequate resources for child protection should be given importance starting with the setting up of a benchmark;
6. Ensure that regional programmes in addressing VAC highlight the important role of local government units in the implementation of and in delivery of services for child protection, recovery and reintegration;
7. Promote coordination and collaboration amongst all institutions and agencies of government at national and local levels, especially institutions or agencies who are mandated to provide services that have been devolved, in responding to VAC;
8. Declare an ASEAN Day of Remembrance to raise awareness and involvement of people to address VAC.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

9. Develop a regional monitoring system involving all stakeholders including children to determine the progress of the follow-up to the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children;
10. Develop a common definition of and indicators to determine existence of violence against children taking into consideration its physical and non-physical manifestations, and the specific vulnerabilities of groups of children who are marginalized or discriminated on the basis of disability, citizenship status, gender, sexual orientation and other status;
11. Support the development of independent complaints-receiving mechanisms within existing national human rights institutions or Ombudspersons at the country and local levels that are accessible to children and other stakeholders and that are capable to effectively respond to complaints submitted;

### **Capacity Building**

12. Promote through basic education and life skills training positive discipline methodologies informed by existing traditions or cultural practices that promote non-violence and child rights;
13. Enhance the role of media, including social media, in monitoring and reporting cases of violence against children and ensure that their conduct of work are consistent with child rights standards;
14. Increase venues for discussion on the issue of VAC;

### **Children's Participation**

15. Ensure that all countries in ASEAN have child participation standards and frameworks consistent with the UNCRC;
16. Mainstream minimum standards of child participation in all government institutions, civil society organizations and NGOs taking into consideration the best interest of children;
17. Support capacities of child-led organizations as well as marginalized groups of children in monitoring, reporting and responding to instances of VAC;
18. Strengthen child rights, life skills and intercultural education in formal and non-formal education settings, including those in institutions of care;

### **Recovery and Response**

19. Develop guidelines and standards for redress, recovery, care and reintegration of victims of VAC;
20. Strengthen capacities of state and non-state actors who are responsible in monitoring and responding to instances of violence against children, including law enforcers, teachers, immigration officials, health workers, community volunteers and leaders, parents, family members and youth organizations;
21. Develop a regional response to children on the move whose access to social services, including education, health and legal services, in destination countries are limited.

For Further Information:

Ryan V. Silverio  
Convenor  
Child Rights Coalition Asia  
Unit 1501 Future Point Plaza 1  
112 Panay Avenue, Quezon City  
Philippines  
Telefax: +632-376-63-88  
Email: [rsilverio@childrightscoalitionasia.org](mailto:rsilverio@childrightscoalitionasia.org)  
Website: [www.childrightscoalitionasia.org](http://www.childrightscoalitionasia.org)