

CIRCLE° South Asia Regional Newsletter


Greetings from Kathmandu!


Welcome to the Second in a series of CIRCLE South Asia newsletters. We will be circulating this newsletter from the CIRCLE Nepal office on a quarterly basis for the benefit of the partner organizations, stakeholders, beneficiaries and other interested parties for sharing experiences and networking.


For the second edition, to acknowledge the contributions of the participating community-based organizations, five CIRCLE partners of three different countries are highlighted. Future editions should be spearheaded by partner organizations themselves who are encouraged to submit to subsequent issues.


The editors value your feedback with suggestions for content or special discussion topics. This newsletter will serve as a medium to share innovative and high-impact activities and results, and as a reminder of the valuable and challenging work in which we are all engaged.


CONTENTS

-  CIRCLE partners work

-  Interview with Chief Executive NDS

-  Constitution regarding Primary Education in South Asian Circle Countries

-  A glance at Child Labor in South Asian Circle Countries

-  Events and Items of Note

Special thanks to the staff of NDS who provided answers for the Interview Section. Thanks are also due for Mr. Pratap Rai, CIRCLE-Intern, who collected information and Ms. Mona Sharma, communication officer of Winrock Nepal. We also acknowledge our partner organizations for their input and enthusiasm.

Dr. Milan Adhikary
Regional Manager- South Asia
Winrock International, CIRCLE Project

See ILO-IPEC's 2006 Global Report on Child Labor

["The end of child labour: Within reach"](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/index.htm)

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/index.htm>

°Community-based Innovations to Reduce Child Labor through Education (CIRCLE). Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Labor under cooperative agreements E-9-K-2-0048 and E-9-K-4-0005

Deepalaya: Featuring Innovativeness

Deepalaya is an Indian NGO working to better the lives of children from underprivileged families in the capital city of Delhi. Deepalaya works in coordination with local schools, and has recently carried out class activities and extra curricular activities that boost children's interest in education and enhance their self-confidence. Activities such as sports, physical exercise, paintings, celebration days, etc. were included alongside flashcard pictures, poems, plays and interaction classes to stimulate children and give an extra attraction to attend school. As expected, this has sparked overwhelming interest in education, and stabilized school attendance. Deepalaya efforts have been pivotal in facilitating a conducive environment for school attendance. By conducting home visits, parent-teacher meetings, weekly teacher's meeting, forming Self Help Groups (SHG's) and theatre workshops, and writing skills programs, this NGO has improved and strengthened local educational systems. This has helped establish a network of various stakeholders in the community, including them in mainstreaming child led development programs.

A significant and innovative building block in Deepalaya's core endeavor is the concept and practice of volunteerism. Through this, the organization has successfully harnessed many agencies and individuals who have championed the cause of the underprivileged. These volunteers have helped in the development of teaching/learning materials, assisting teachers in teaching, engaging students in extra-curricular activities, developing MIS system, assisting in home visits, class management, resource mobilization (bags, notebooks, sweaters, documentation, etc.). The volunteers not only contribute directly to the project but are also ambassadors who spread the word against child labor and about their activities. The volunteers also express satisfaction with their work. Geeti was one of the volunteers whose views are highlighted:



Geeti's Feedback-

"I have always wanted to do something for the underprivileged, so when I heard about Deepalaya from a friend I left my job as teacher in Assam to join this organization. When oriented about the various projects and the activities, I was moved by the vision and the services rendered to the unfortunate children. Consequently I took on the offer to work as a volunteer for the project for educating children at risk. The involvement with the Project has been a great turning point in my life; it has given me a satisfaction, which I had always desired.

In the project I am involved in helping the teachers in classroom, making teaching-learning materials, home visits, motivating the parents and documenting the activities. During this small period I have made good rapport with the children. It is a great feeling to gift a smile to a deprived child and I feel privileged to be associated with this project.

Giving Disabled Children a Voice

Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID) a Bangladeshi NGO is committed for the wellbeing of disabled children at-risk, or already involved, in any form of child labor.

CSID works to create widespread awareness of, and benevolence towards, disabled child workers. Individual awareness campaigns tailored for various segments of society including families, government officials, and teachers and schools have been conducted. These campaigns highlight the importance of education, to right to education for disabled children, as well as issues such as child labor, family and community responsibilities towards children.

Participants of the family meetings have realized the importance of education and the need to create a supportive social and economic environment in order to send their children to school rather than to work. They are now fully and actively committed to supporting better lives for their children.

Similarly, teachers have realized their crucial role in supporting and ensuring friendly environments for disabled children. Following the meeting, teachers have agreed to take full responsibility to ensure this and have vouched to hire only qualified and dedicated teachers who treat these disabled working children well.

School meetings were also held with school teachers, students and family members in attendance. Previous cases of misbehavior of some teachers and fellow students towards two disabled children enrolled by the project were highlighted. The project staff presented the situation from the children's perspective, enlightening teachers and fellow children about disability, negative consequences of child labor, and the importance of education. The International Convention and national policy regarding the right-to-education of all children, including disabled children, as well as a recent directive of the Government of Bangladesh to enroll disabled children in school was discussed. Teachers and students have subsequently realized their mistakes and have pledged to henceforth treat all disabled children well.

Hand-in-Hand against Child Labor in Nepal

Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Center (CWIN) is actively advocating for a collective umbrella organization in order to campaign effectively against child labor in Nepal among National and International stakeholders. From 2004 to March 2006, the CWIN-CIRCLE project has been involved in varied activities focused on education as a tool to reduce child labor exploitation. In this regard, CWIN conducted a national workshop in January highlighting the roles of national stakeholders in reducing child labor through education. Mr.Gauri Pradhan, former president of CWIN, presented a concept paper for this vision to representatives of various national and international organizations working in the field of child rights and education in Nepal. Centered on the theme 'From Exploitation to Education,' all of the programs advocate bringing more child laborers and potential child laborers into educational system and emphasized the contribution stakeholders can make in all of these programs. Participants concluded that meaningful education is only one major tool in the fight to eradicate exploitation of child laborers. A major outcome of this workshop was the formation of a core working body to follow up on the role of national stakeholders, and just implementation of child labor policies and programs focusing on education. Subsequent meetings have included the Ministry of Labor as a pivotal player in the core team.

CAC acquainted media persons about CIRCLE Project

Community Action Center (CAC), one of the CIRCLE partner organizations of Nepal, recently completed its project in 10 Village Development Committees of Bhaktapur Districts in Nepal. During the end of its completion period, CAC organized a one-day interaction program on the CIRCLE Project, with the objectives to acquaint media persons about the CIRCLE Project, to discuss with them the role of media in the reduction of Child labor, and to explore the ways and means to present issues related with child labor in the media.

The Program Coordinator, Mr. Pradeep Gangol, highlighted the international convention of child labor and the commitments to be made by Nepal, being a signatory to these conventions. During the interaction, CAC also discussed the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) declarations and an outline of Anti child labor initiatives being carried out by the government of Nepal.

Similarly, the President of CAC, Mrs. Tulasa Lata Amatya discussed social issues related to children like birth registration, gender equality, and property rights.

The Program Coordinator gave detailed information about the CIRCLE Project and the role of community-based organizations in anti-child labor initiatives, including the role of the media in the reduction of child labor in Nepal.

At the end, the media persons said that they had not taken child labor issues seriously before. But after this interactive program, they realized and appreciated the efforts of CAC to reduce child labor in Bhaktapur Nepal. They said that they could stretch their outreach for helping the children.

Child Labor in Bangladesh: An Interview with NDS

The National Development Society (NDS) works for the betterment of street children in Dhaka and Chittagong province in Bangladesh. The following interview was given by the Chief Executive of NDS, Mr. A.Q. Akon:

1. How long has NDS been working in the field of child labor? Why are you involved in this field?

We have been working against child labor since April 2002. Bangladesh is a poor country. The poor children, especially, are very much neglected; we wanted to give these children a voice society, policy makers and all other actors would be active in protecting their rights. Education is a primary barrier. Parents cannot afford to send their children to school; we work to motivate society to come forward and help.

We also felt compelled to join the cause because the poor send their children to earn at very young ages simply to survive. We, as a society, should understand this bitter reality and come forward to end this situation and withdraw children from labor.

2. In your view what are the major causes of child labor in your country?

The root cause is poverty. Low income forces parents to send children out to labor for additional income for survival.

Adequate policies to counter this are also lacking. The government pays scant attention to this issue because of inadequate resources.

There also aren't effective laws and applications preventing employment of child laborers. Finally, society is largely ignorant of this issue, and needs to be sensitized to the situation and their role in it.

3. What are the major contributions of your organization in combating child labor in your region or country?

NDS provides education and skill development training to these unfortunate children. We also work to sensitize communities, employers, policy-makers, parents and civil society against child labor. We also advocate for equal rights for a better life for all children in Bangladesh, irrespective of social status.

4. What do you feel needs to be addressed in order to eliminate child labor?

Poor parents need to be availed of technical and financial assistance towards raising their incomes, so that they do not depend on the income of minor children for mere survival. Politically, the government lacks determination and resources to support poor parents and their children. It is imperative that the government realizes the importance of this issue; policy makers need to be motivated to make effective laws to curb child labor. We also need to understand that these children are poor and will have to earn a living one day. We therefore need to provide general and vocational education to the children to enable them to establish a labor-free future. This has to be backed by strong sensitization campaigns encouraging society to accept some responsibility to end child labor

5. Tell us about any innovative anti-child labor activities implemented by your organization.

NDS believes that for sustainable withdrawal of child labor, primary attention should be given to strengthen the income of parents. In our view, this can best be attained by skill development training and micro-credit assistance to parents who want to be self employed. Such credit assistance will be given to parents who have working children of school going age. Such credit assistance will be given once they withdraw their child from work and send them to school. We have applied this approach as a pilot, and the consequences were phenomenal. We hope to replicate such creative activity towards alleviating the root of child labor in poor countries.

6. Situation of Child labor in your country perspective.

- Working for over 12 hours and sometimes 16 hours everyday.
- With many employers, there is no weekly holiday.
- Very low paid (In many cases it is even US\$ 7/8 per month).
- Exposed to health hazards.
- Exposed to accidental death (fumes, falling from high-rise buildings under construction, worst kinds of skin disease due to chemical reaction.
- No system of life insurance back-up in case of death.

7. Child labor monitoring mechanism adopted by your organization

NDS has a monthly child labor monitoring mechanism. This helps especially in continuously understanding and keeping track of children either at risk of labor, or former laborers.

Primary Education in CIRCLE South Asian Countries

S. No.	Country	Constitution
1	Bangladesh	<p><u>Free and compulsory education: The State shall adopt effective measures for the purposes of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a uniform, mass-oriented, and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law. • Relating education to the needs of society and producing properly trained and motivated citizens to serve those needs. • Removing illiteracy within such time as may be determined by law.
2	Nepal	<p><u>Article 18 Cultural and Educational Right:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each community residing within the kingdom of Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, and culture. • Each community shall have the right to operate schools up to the primary level in its own mother tongue for imparting education to its children. <p><u>Article 26 States Policies:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State shall make necessary arrangements to safeguard the rights and interests of children and shall ensure that they are not exploited, and shall make gradual arrangements for free education.
3	India	<p><u>Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State shall endeavor to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years. <p><u>86th Constitutional Amendment Act (passed in 2002) – elementary education a fundamental right:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all the children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine...The State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.
4	Pakistan	<p><u>Chapter 1: Fundamental Rights</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No child below the age of fourteen years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment. <p><u>Chapter 2: Principles of Policy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of backward classes or areas. • The State shall remove illiteracy and provide free and compulsory secondary education within minimum possible period.

Source: *The State of South Asia's Children 2005*, Unicef

The Child Labor Situation in South Asia: A Glance

It is estimated that out of 300 million children in South Asia between the age of 5 and 14 years, 21.6 million are working children in this age group. The factors that generate child labor in south Asia include parental poverty and illiteracy; social and economic circumstances; lack of awareness; lack of access to basic and meaningful quality education and skills, and high rates of adult unemployment and under-employment.

Country	Nepal	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh
Total population in Millions	24.6	1,049.5	149.9	143.8
Total Children (5-14 years) in Millions	6.225	210	40	35.06
Working Children (5-14 years) in Millions	1.660	11.2	3.3	5.05

Source: Human Development Report 2004

Child labor in south Asia has some striking similarities and forms:

- Child domestic labor;
- Children working in hazardous industries;
- Children working in export industries;
- Child trafficking (both internally and across borders);
- Child bonded labor in agriculture and certain parts of the industrial and informal sectors.

Web Sources: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/newdelhi/ipcc/responses/>

Events and Items of Note

- USDOL-organized a Regional Grantee Consultation Workshop in February on 7-9, 2006 for Asia/Europe/MENA team. The workshop was facilitated by Encompass LLC. Dr. Milan Adhikary, Regional Manager represented South Asia Region and presented a paper entitled “Reducing Child Labor and Strengthening the Education: Sustaining Advances” under the theme of Ensuring Sustainability. The paper highlighted efforts of 3 CIRCLE Partners Arunodhaya-India, Aasaman-Nepal and Manab Unauyan Kendra (MUK)-Bangladesh for ensuring sustainability.
- March 2, Vivita Rogenberg, International Relations Officer, US-DOL visited Nepal and visited CAC-Nepal’s site with Regional Manager.
- April 4, an interview with the CIRCLE- Regional Manager was broadcast from FM Radio. The discussion topic was on overall Winrock Programs and specifically CIRCLE.
- April 5-7, The Regional Manager made a site visit to Western Nepal Banke, District for monitoring BASE/Nepal.
- April 19-21, CIRCLE Regional Selection Committee Meeting Round – III in Royal Hotel Singi Kathmandu, Nepal.

Congratulations!

To 5 C's

Partner organizations of CIRCLE for successful project completion

CWIN-Nepal,
CAC-Nepal
CSID-Bangladesh,
CCF-Pakistan
CWISH-Nepal