

## **THE NEW DELHI DECLARATION ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION FOR CHILD RIGHTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

We, the delegations of the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Niue, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vietnam committed to the promotion of child rights in our South-South cooperation agenda; the development of networks for knowledge exchange, peer learning and coordination with specific attention to the topics of Adolescents, Early Childhood Development, and Urban Settings; and committed to assessing the progress and advances on South-South cooperation among countries of Asia and the Pacific to further fulfill child rights in the best interests of the child at the 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific in New Delhi, India from 23 to 25 October 2013:

1. Reaffirm that child rights are fundamental to all cultures and societies and are crucial to children's growth and upbringing, and that child survival, development, protection, health, education, and participation are vital for economic growth and human development;
2. Restate our commitment to the realization of all rights of all children within our respective national jurisdictions, as expressed in our universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and wide ratification of its two Optional Protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and other relevant international human rights instruments;
3. Are convinced that, despite the great diversity represented by the 32 countries in Asia and the Pacific participating in the High Level Meeting, the people of the region share much in common, have strong mutual interests in socio-economic and human development, and have much to gain from closer cooperation to share good practices and lessons learned in support of the realization of child rights;
4. Believe that South-South Cooperation offers a valuable opportunity for the region, and note with satisfaction the increased collaboration in the years following the 1<sup>st</sup> High Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific held in

Beijing in November 2010, and the progress made by Governments to fully realize child rights, and agree to continue to intensify collaboration and enhance these efforts in the months and years ahead;

5. Acknowledge with gratitude the forum for dialogue and facilitation provided by the host Government of India and the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);
6. Welcome the active participation of our partner organizations, namely the Asian Development Bank, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at this meeting and their commitment to continue their cooperation for the promotion of child rights in Asia and the Pacific.

#### **STATUS OF CHILDREN IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

7. Acknowledge that inter-generational improvements in health and education show promise for the 1.2 billion children in Asia and the Pacific today. Many of the children of today are healthier and enjoy a higher standard of living than their parents. They are also better educated and have a greater ability than previous generations to contribute to their own betterment and that of their communities and countries. Yet, serious and enduring challenges continue to inhibit very large numbers of children in Asia and the Pacific, particularly girls, to realize their full development potential. Poverty has been a major determinant in preventing the realisation of their full potential. Other structural determinants include inequality, conflicts, economic and political instability, the adverse effects of natural disasters and the serious erosion of coastlines, depletion of fresh water and changes in sea water conditions affecting marine livelihoods.

#### ***Adolescents***

8. Acknowledge that there are 650 million adolescents in Asia and the Pacific, and that adolescents are a rapidly increasing percentage of the total population of many countries in the region.
9. Recognize that the rapidly increasing numbers of adolescents in our countries create the potential for greater prosperity and growth as the numbers of those working increases in relation to those who are dependent on them. However, we also recognize that

adolescents—our citizens and soon to be our future workforce and human resource base—need to be healthy, educated, suitably trained, and able to secure quality jobs for our countries and to realize their own self-development.

10. Note that adolescents are facing severe gender disparities in several countries. There are significant differences in the net secondary school enrolment ratios between boys and girls, and between several countries in the region. We recognize the need to pay attention to out of school adolescents, particularly girls, and to provide alternative forms of education to empower them and enable their meaningful participation in decision making processes on issues which affect them. We recognize that many out of school adolescents are living with disabilities and need much more attention to special learning opportunities.
11. Note with concern that the practice of marriage before 18 years of age not only separates girls from their family and community at a very young age, but also imposes many restrictions on their personal and professional freedom. And we note that teenage pregnancy places the lives of young girls and their babies at severe risk. These risks increase in pregnancies to unmarried teenage girls.
12. Note with concern the high rates of violence against children and adolescents in the region, particularly against adolescent girls, including those who are married. We recognize that adolescents are exposed to physical and sexual violence, drug abuse, and face risks of trafficking and child pornography, cyber-crime, and harmful use of social media. Not only does this constitute a grave violation of their rights, but it also has serious implications for their well-being and productivity as adults and is linked with an inter-generational cycle of gender-based violence faced by many girls and women.
13. Further note with concern that close to 25 percent of all adolescent girls in the region are severely underweight, and that the lack of nutritious food and positive feeding practices during early childhood and adolescence causes irreparable damage to their health and nutrition, and the health and nutrition of their children. Another challenge is the high prevalence of anemia in several countries in the region. Furthermore, undernourished adolescent girls are likely to give birth to low birth-weight babies, perpetuating an inter-generational cycle of under-nutrition. At the same time, in some countries, there are

health issues related to overweight adolescents, increasing risk of non-communicable diseases and high-risk pregnancies.

14. Further note with concern the issue of youth unemployment in the region. While socio-economic conditions contribute to child labour and put children at risk of exploitation, many adolescents of eligible age are unable to find decent work once they complete their education and training.
15. Recognize the imperative to more systematically understand and address the circumstances and needs of adolescents through our policies, laws, plans, budgets, and actions, including collecting data and conducting research on the most disadvantaged and excluded—such as adolescents living with disabilities.

### ***Early Childhood Development***

16. Recognize that early childhood development policies and programmes that support the care and education of all children (including children with special needs and orphaned children) are of critical importance to the immediate well-being of children and to their future. Investing in the early years is a key strategy to reduce social inequalities. Adults who have received the best start in the earliest years of life (including exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, full immunization, clean water and sanitation, adequate health care, and opportunities for cognitive development, as well as protection from abuse and violence) have a greater potential to lead more productive and rewarding lives.
17. Recognize that investments in early childhood development interventions, which ensure access for all children, with special attention to the most vulnerable, produce significant economic returns for individuals, families, communities, and countries. Early Childhood Development can also be advanced through media to promote a supportive environment for children.
18. Note that many young children and families in Asia and the Pacific are participating in community-based parent support programmes and early learning initiatives designed to pave the way to success in school. Yet, also recognize that despite significant increases in programme enrolment there are children in Asia and the Pacific, particularly poor children

and children in especially difficult circumstances, who do not have access to early childhood development opportunities.

***Urban Settings***

19. Acknowledge that currently 1.6 billion people, or 40 percent of people living in Asia and the Pacific, reside in urban areas. Affirm that our cities and towns are engines of economic growth and centres of social development, culture, creativity and innovation, which produce over 80 percent of the region's GDP. Further note that cities hold tremendous potential for the cost-effective delivery of high quality services for all children while recognizing that the high population density in urban settings heightens the impact of natural disasters on children, especially for small island states.
20. Recognize the importance of focusing on children in urban areas, bearing in mind the economic and social disparities within such areas and the challenges posed by rural to urban migration. At the same time, we recognize that the population residing in rural areas requires the same focus to ensure that the rural to urban migration push factor is removed and children are not adversely impacted.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Building on the discussions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific, we undertake to pursue the following recommendations in the context of South-South cooperation to fully realize the rights of all children in Asia and the Pacific:

***Overall Recommendations***

21. Continue to build on the most successful approaches to advancing South-South Cooperation for child rights, particularly: regional forums, high level conferences and meetings, exchange visits and study tours, sharing of country experiences and lessons learned, peer-to-peer learning—including web-based and other internet exchanges, twinning arrangements, and bilateral and multi-lateral partnerships.
22. Collaborate to improve methodologies for data collection, to access and more fully use existing and new databases, and use data for the purposes of advancing child rights.
23. Enhance inter-country learning and exchange of best practices to advance the realization of child rights through the actions of governments, in partnership with civil society and communities—as well as lessons learned from approaches that did not work.
24. Encourage multi-country research studies—including comparative and trend analysis, and longitudinal studies—in collaboration with research and academic institutions and with assistance from regional and international organizations.

***Recommendations on Adolescents***

25. Ensure adequate investments for and with adolescents—including in the areas of health, education, job creation and social participation—and including social protection programmes, to address the different threats and challenges faced at each stage of adolescence, to eliminate violence against children and adolescents, and to promote adolescents' participation in their own capacity development.
26. Share and promote strategies to take into account the perspectives of adolescents in the formulation of policies and in the identification and implementation of actions affecting adolescents.
27. Regularly collect, share/disseminate, and use data on adolescents to strengthen our understanding of their lives and to support evidence-based policy making.
28. Work towards realizing meaningful participation of adolescents, and encourage and enhance inter-country exchange among adolescents and the sharing of good practices to build on and expand civic education, youth participation, positive uses of social media, and leadership.

29. Pursue strategies to improve access, quality, and relevance of lower secondary education and vocational training, improve student retention and graduation rates, and strengthen the future employability of adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, by sharing country experiences on skill enhancement and vocational training.

***Recommendations on Early Childhood Development***

30. Focus on reviewing and enhancing national and regional coordination of ECD policies, programmes, and service components—including exclusive breastfeeding, effective complementary feeding, full immunization, access to clean water, access to hygienic sanitation, access to adequately iodized salt, access to quality early learning and stimulation, and cognitive development opportunities—in a protective and nurturing environment with a particular focus on reducing disparities. We also note the importance of parental education and prevention from abuse and violence within families and communities.

***Recommendations on Urban Settings***

31. Make available accurate urban data to identify disparities, with a specific focus on slums and peri-urban areas.
32. Consider developing social protection programmes specifically targeted to support urban children and adolescents.
33. Address issues of urban inclusion to support equitable access to services and livelihood options, particularly for the most marginalized and excluded children such as those living in slums or living in poor conditions.
34. Enhance investments toward the realization of child rights in today's small and medium sized cities of less than 100,000 inhabitants (of different sizes depending on the country), as these cities will experience the bulk of future urban growth in the region.
35. Undertake, where appropriate, South-South cooperation between cities in the region to plan and shape cities that live up to their potential to promote child rights, with the involvement of mayors and local authorities.

36. Examine issues relating to the enhancement of services to rural populations and other places of out-migration to address more holistically the issue of rural to urban migration and urbanization.

#### **FOLLOW-UP AND REPORTING**

37. We pledge to build strong linkages among the participating delegations to address the recommendations made in this Declaration and for each government to issue a report at the end of 2015 on the status of our actions.

#### **SUPPORT FROM PARTNERS IN THE REGION**

38. We request our development partners to support our governments individually and collectively to fulfill the recommendations for action in this Declaration. In particular, we recognise the importance of enhancing and mobilising financial and other resources for fulfilling these recommendations.

#### **ADOPTION**

We unanimously adopt this, the New Delhi Declaration on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights. We thank the Government of India and the people of New Delhi for providing a forum for dialogue and their warm hospitality as hosts of the meeting, and welcome the support of UNICEF and other partners for the consultations.