

# PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHOUT BORDERS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

ASIA MEET

3-4 April, 2017 | Dhaka, Bangladesh



**GLOBAL MARCH**  
Against Child Labour  
Contra el Trabajo Infantil  
Contre le Travail des Enfants

## Event highlights

1. To have parliamentarians develop mechanisms within communities and bridge the quality divide in education.
2. To have increased investment on education than military. Education has to be more important than weapons.
3. To have SAARC countries come together for plugging cross border trafficking
4. To allocate 6% of the GDP to Education and ensure equity in education for most vulnerable girls and young women
5. Members of Parliaments to prioritise the issue of children and act to restore rights of children within their countries and constituencies and also to influence policies at the regional level such as SAARC or ASEAN.

South Asia is one of the fastest-growing regions for human trafficking, slavery and child labour in the world. Challenges like these with their unique nuances are hard to be addressed and have the childhood of millions of children at stake. Girls and Young Women (GYW) in particular require more attention as they are vulnerable to various forms of violence with their exploitation impacting the whole community, a reality that is often overlooked. It has therefore become increasingly imperative for the region to bring these issues into context and to encourage Members of Parliaments to prioritise the issue of children and take action to not only restore rights of children within their countries and constituencies but also to influence policies at the regional level such as that of SAARC or ASEAN, in particular for GYW.

To address these challenges comprehensively and reinforce regional cooperation and strengthen mechanisms for sharing of information, experience, expertise and good practices the First Asia Meet of Parliamentarians Without Borders (PWB) for Children's Rights was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 3 and 4 April 2017. After two successful global PWB meetings in Kathmandu, Nepal (2015) and The Hague, The Netherlands (2016), the regional meet of PWB for Children's Rights saw participation from 13 Members of Parliament from 5 Asian countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The one and a half day event began with an introduction of Parliamentarians, their work on children's rights/human rights and the situation of child labour, slavery, trafficking and violence against GYW in their respective countries. The meeting was opened by **Mr Emran Ul Huq Chaudhary, Chairperson- Bangladesh Shishu Adhikari Forum (BSAF)** who talked about the improvement in indicators of issues such as infant mortality rate, children's health, education and child marriage in Bangladesh. He stated that such improvements need



**Young women, girls and boys are trafficked across the border from Bangladesh to India and exploited in India. We should feel that our daughters are suffering. We need to work beyond borders against this evil and the parliamentarians need to take the lead. Politics should be driven by compassion."**

**Nobel Peace Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi**

Asia Meet of Parliamentarians Without Borders 2017, Dhaka, Bangladesh

to be seen in other Asian countries as well and the onus for strengthening regional initiatives is on the Members of Parliament (MPs) from different regions.



Mr Nazmul Haq Prodhan, MP Bangladesh

**Mr Nazmul Haq Prodhan**, one of the MPs of Bangladesh and also a PWB member, in his short introductory speech said, **"Every country of South Asia is facing more or less the same problems. We have common problems like child trafficking, child labour, child marriage and different kinds of abuse and exploitation of children and that's why more initiatives to ensure protection, promotion and realisation of child rights are needed at not only county level but also at regional level."** He also appealed for reduction in the military budget and enhancing the budget for children, particularly in Bangladesh. **Mr K.C Tyagi**, MP from India and PWB

member asserted the need for working towards a child friendly world, and making children free of slavery, especially at the grass root level. He also talked about trafficking of GYW as another significant challenge for the South Asian region due to which thousands go missing every day and new threats for children are emerging in the form of organised crime.

The indicators and statistics related to issues of children reveal the appalling situation of millions of children in the region indeed but there is a need to look at these challenges beyond just numbers. **Nobel Laureate and founder of PWB Mr Kailash Satyarthi**, in the keynote address, urged the participants to look at the exploitation of children beyond data and figures as these numbers do not capture the physical, social and psychological effects of such exploitative practices, some of which are permanent in nature. **Mr Satyarthi asserted that an integrated approach should be adopted by working on the 4 Ps - People, Planet, Peace, and Parliamentarians to re-establish the strong moral leadership character of power and a new political and social context in the world.** He further emphasised on the role of MPs to also seek alliance between various stakeholders to protect the rights of children, in particular the most vulnerable young women and girls by reaching out to businesses, financial institutions, civil society, faith leaders, academicians, medical fraternity and their selected leaders.



Nobel Peace Laureate Mr. Kailash Satyarthi

Parliamentarians also have a crucial role in combatting trafficking related exploitation of women and children and improving access to quality education, particularly for girls and young women. To explore

this role further, the MPs identified and agreed upon their shared key role for combatting cross-border child trafficking (SDG 8.7) in Asia through existing policies and national action plans and overseeing its effective and successful implementation. They discussed the situation of access to education in their countries and various steps being taken to improve them such as - country level best practices on effective policies and programmes to address the gaps in the existing education system, covering issues of out of school children, education financing, school drop outs and girls' education.

Recalling the role of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) regional taskforce to recognise and prevent cross-border trafficking, **Ms Rasheda K Choudhury, Executive Director of Campaign For Popular Education (CAMPE) and Former Advisor to Government on Primary and Mass Education in Bangladesh**, asserted the need to put in place a system to address trafficking in women and children. She highlighted some of the ground level realities of trafficking and prostitution and stated that trafficking of women and children cannot be mitigated unless the member states of SAARC strengthen effective regional cooperation for preventing trafficking for prostitution since a majority of them share borders with each other and thus play critical role in addressing cross border trafficking. She also added that trafficking is related particularly to the issue of exclusion and abuse and in order to tackle the issue it is important for us to strengthen the role of communities and Legislative members who can act as facilitators.



Ms Rasheeda Choudhury, Campaign For Popular Education (CAMPE)



Mr Bhagwant Khuba, MP India

Combatting trafficking without efficient legal and policy frameworks is not possible. MP from India, **Mr Bhagwant Khuba** stated that each Parliamentarian should take charge to strengthen the laws related to trafficking and sexual abuse in their constituency and also work on the gaps that exist in the laws. He also spoke at length about the vulnerability of young women and girls stating that "women, who suffer often, do not report the same because this is considered as a personal problem, and also a stigma by the communities. But the society should be able to own this as a crime against them and hence should be able to take it up to give justice and care for the victims." One of the most notable remarks was made by **Ms Fawzia**

**Koofi**, MP in Kabul and Vice President of the National Assembly of Afghanistan who asserted that problems such as violence against children are often not taken seriously since children don't have the right to vote. As a women's rights activist she also expressed her concern on the challenges of addressing issues of violence against women and children and commented that "it requires a lot of patience, tolerance and commitment and should be looked at as a vicious circle as most of them are at a greater risk of being trafficked."



Mr Dilli Choudhary, MP Nepal

Legislators also have a crucial role to play in improving and strengthening access to quality education for the most vulnerable children. The Legislators present at the PWB meeting spoke on the situation of access to education in their countries and various steps being taken to improve them such as country level best practices on effective policies and programmes to address the gaps in the existing education system, covering issues of out of school children, in particular of the girl child, and education financing to have more girls in schools than at work.

Ms Fawzia Koofi, MP Kabul, Vice President of the National Assembly of Afghanistan

A very useful insight was shared by **Mr Dilli Choudhary**, MP from Nepal who suggested that improving the quality of politics and interaction amongst politicians to address various situations of children's rights should be taken seriously, especially for education of the girl child and minorities such as backward castes in the entire sub-continent. MP from India, **Mr Ravi Prakash Verma** added that "primary education needs attention of parliamentarians without borders. Education must at least be 6% of the GDP and this could be something that all of us should be trying together to achieve because human resource building is important".



Mr Ravi Prakash Verma, MP India

Towards the end of the session the Parliamentarians collectively agreed upon the need to look into issues of violence against women and children in their constituencies as well as collectively by sharing good practices, experiences and working on the SAARC protocol to improve the situation of children in the sub-continent. The legislators also decided to dedicate a day in the Parliament to discuss only the

issue of children's rights, in particular of young women and girls with a commitment to work towards quality, inclusive and equitable education that must be delivered to every child no matter what.

The second day of PWB for Children's Rights focused discussions on the Legislators' Role in Supporting Elimination of Child Labour in Business Supply Chains. The session also featured debates on implementing the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines, the United Nations Guiding Principles with a focus on the state duty to protect and address salient child rights issues within the (international) value chains. During the discussion, **Mr Israfil Alam**, MP from Bangladesh attested that, "there is lot of child labour in informal sector such as garments but it is not visible in the formal sector, in particular in Bangladesh" which therefore accentuates the problem since the focus is usually on the formal sector and international supply chains. He asserted that there is a need to focus on the demand side of supply to put a check on using children in production chains and for working towards a deeper integration of human rights in business policy for preventing child labour and trafficking and informing businesses about negative effects of engaging children in supply chains.



Mr Israfil Alam, MP Bangladesh



Mr K.C Tyagi, MP India

**Mr KC Tyagi**, MP from India said that the issues of child labour, forced labour ad slavery in supply chains are not merely economic issue but should be seen as social, political and cultural issue where there is a lack of respect for children's rights and safety. He also talked about the conflict between businesses' interests and sustainability and stated that "we cannot assure sustainable development without including and addressing the issues of children and the Parliamentarians must assure that children's rights are always placed as priority". The Parliamentarians also agreed to collectively work on strengthening the role of businesses and financial institutions, in particular enforcing stricter regulations with regards to clean supply chains

during granting / renewing of licenses to the companies and wherever possible take strict actions to also cancel licenses in cases of violations especially where child labour is found in the supply chain. It is thus a shared responsibility of Businesses, Parliamentarians, CSOs and other key stakeholders to not only take robust measures in mitigating exploitative practices that violate the rights of women and children but also take initiatives to add value to investments in young women, girls and children for their empowerment.

# **Way forward on the PWB Initiative: Steps to Achieve the Vision for 2017**

The last session of the second day focused on the steps to achieve the vision for PWB Asia 2017 and to collate key actions on the 3 themes discussed at the meeting.

## **WAY FORWARD**

- Making Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights a self-funded and self-regulated initiative.
- Each PWB member must focus on the Parliamentary Forums in their own countries and work with their Parliaments to declare a dedicated session on children's rights and the rights of girls and young women in every Parliament Session.
- Ensure adequate budgetary allocations to the issues of children in every country.
- Writing a joint letter to the SAARC Secretariat advocating for stricter protocols on violence against children, in particular trafficking, slavery, sexual exploitation, and child marriage.
- Signing of a declaration endorsed by all members present.
- A meeting of key stakeholders lead by Parliamentarians from Pakistan and Afghanistan in India to take forward the decisions and collaborations from this meeting
- Inclusion of other Asian countries like Myanmar and Bhutan proposed for future discussions and meetings.

The co-founder of this initiative, **Mr Kailash Satyarthi** while addressing the media encouraged the Parliamentarians by attesting that "now is the time for the Parliamentarians to show bold leadership, morality and compassion beyond Politics as there are very few champions for the cause of children in the Parliament, and taking action for children can make you different from others." He further motivated the MPs by reminding them of the power of democracy that the region is endowed with and to use every opportunity to speak up for the most marginalised people and children of the region, and also against the fundamentalist propaganda that is increasingly clouding the atmosphere of the nations. He asked the Parliamentarians to strengthen youth leadership and direct their energies constructively for the betterment of children.

The PWB Asia meeting ended with a suggestion to form an Asia Steering Committee along with signing of the Declaration (See Annexure II) that describes the key actions to be taken by the Parliamentarians in the time to come. The fourth Global meet of the Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights is proposed to be held in Africa in either Ghana or Togo or in any other country as may seem appropriate in 2017.

# **Annexure I**

## **Agenda**

### **Asia Meeting of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 Dhaka, Bangladesh**

**Day 1: 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017, Monday**

**9:30 am - 10.00 am: Registration of Parliamentarians**

**10.00 am - 10.45 am: Opening Ceremony**

Welcome Address by: Mr. Md. Emranul Huq Chowdhury, Chairperson, BSAF

Introduction by: Mr. Nazmul Haq Prodhan, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh

Remarks by: Mr. K. C. Tyagi, Member of Parliament, India (South Asia Convenor of PWB)

Key Note Address by Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 2014

**10.45 am - 11.15 am: First Session: Knowing our Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights**

An introduction of Parliamentarians and their work on children's rights/human rights (2 mins by each participant)

**11.30 am - 12.00 pm : Second Session: Roundup 2016 & Setting Context for 2017**

- Brief on 2016 meeting and sharing progress/results by Global March
- Setting context for 2017 meeting - Focus on 3 themes under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework covering exploitation, education, children's rights and business principles with a focus on the rights of girls and young women.

Moderator: Ms. Fazilatun Bappy, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh & Global March

**12:00 pm - 1.30 pm: Third Session : Legislators' Role in Combating Trafficking Related Exploitation of Children, Especially of Girls & Young Women**

Brainstorming, identifying and agreeing on the key role of Parliamentarians for combatting cross- border child trafficking (SDG 8.7) in Asia (with a focus on trafficking of girls and young women for different forms of economic and sexual exploitation). The session will discuss possible contributions by Parliamentarians to eliminate trafficking through existing policies and national actions plans and oversee its effective and successful implementation.

Each Parliamentarian could present specific actions that they will take in this regard in their own constituency/Parliament, with their counterparts in their country.

All delegates participate

Moderator: Mr. Ravi Prakash Verma, Member of Parliament, India

**2.30 pm - 4:00 pm: Fourth Session: Legislators' Role in Improving and Strengthening Access to Quality**

**Education for all: Building the Future of the Nation and Asia.**

Legislators can speak on the situation of access to education in their countries and various steps being taken to improve them. Country level best practices on effective policies and programmes to address the gaps in the

existing education system, covering issues of out of school children, education financing, school drop outs and girls. MPs can also link the work to SDG 4 and SDG 5 under this theme.

Each Parliamentarian to present specific actions that they will take in this regard in their own constituency/ Parliament, with their counterparts in their country.

All Delegates Participate

Moderator - Mr. Ravi Prakash Verma, Member of Parliament, India

**4.30 pm - 5.00 pm Day 1 Conclusion**

Conclusion of Day 1 and the highlights of the day by Mr. Aravind Kumar Arunachalem, Member of Parliament, Sri Lanka.

**DAY 2: 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2017, Tuesday**

**9:45 am - 10.00 am: Recap of Day 1**

**10.00 am - 11.15 am: Fifth Session : Legislators' Role in Supporting Elimination of Child Labour in Business Supply Chains; Integrating Children's Rights with Business Principles**

The session will discuss the role of Parliamentarians in implementing the OECD guidelines and the UN guiding principles with the focus on the state duty to protect and addressing salient child rights issues within the (international) value chains. And give their support to the UNICEF's Child rights and business principles as guidance for companies to focus on child rights within their value chain.

Each participant to present their specific idea/commitment on this theme.

All Delegates Participate Moderator - Mr. Israfil Alam, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh

**11.45 am - 1.00 pm: Sixth Session : Way forward on the PWB Initiative: Steps to Achieve the Vision for 2017**

The last session will collate key actions on 3 themes discussed at the meeting, drawing from the 2016 Outcome Document, and will decide next steps, and the host of the next meeting. It will also discuss the terms of reference of the Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights, along with the need of budgetary requirements for future meetings.

**Signing of PWB Dhaka Declaration, 2017**

**Moderator: Mr. Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, Member of Parliament, Nepal**

**1.00 pm - 1.15 pm Closing Ceremony**

Concluding remarks by: Mr. Abdus Shahid Mahmood, Mr. Nazmul Haq Prodhan

Words of Encouragement by: Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Global March

## **Annexure II**

### **Declaration 2017**

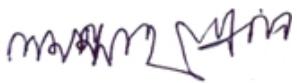
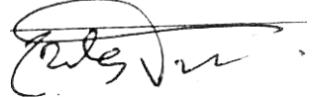
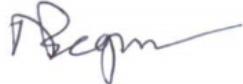
We, the Parliamentarians gathered at the First Asia Meeting of the Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights in Dhaka, Bangladesh -

- acknowledge the completion of 2 years of the initiative whose efforts successfully helped in furthering the issues of children's rights among different countries of the world;
  - recognise children, especially girls and young women, as specifically vulnerable to various physical, sexual and economic exploitation;
  - reaffirm our commitment and acknowledge the relevance and necessity of engaging Parliamentarians to take up and further the agenda for the promotion and protection of children's rights, rights of girls and young women, by the following:
1. Make efforts to prioritise and ensure consistent discourse in our constituencies, political parties and parliamentary debates towards strengthening the legislative frameworks and programs for the protection of children, supported by effective implementation and adequate budgetary allocations; advocate for a dedicated session on children's rights in every parliamentary session;
  2. Advocate for good quality, inclusive, and free public education, especially for girls, which promotes tolerance, unity and global citizenship, along with integrating children's rights in curriculum;
  3. To go beyond the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children For Prostitution and recognise through bi-lateral and multilateral commitments trafficking for forced labour, child labour, other forms of modern day slavery, child soldiering, drug couriering and sale, child marriage, and forms of sexual exploitation, especially targeting girls and young women (identifying the catalytic role of the technology);
  4. Use relevant international days to generate awareness about child labour, education and trafficking- for example- World Day Against Child Labour, - 12 June, International Day of the Girl Child - 11 October etc; dedicate one day for celebrating children of our respective countries as 'Children's Day';
  5. Ensure strengthening of national parliamentary forums in their role to reach out to other relevant parliamentary bodies, develop bi-lateral relations to address specific challenges faced by nations and regional and international agencies to prioritise the issue of children's rights;
  6. Participate in the development of national and regional development plans to achieve the SDGs, particularly for achieving Target 8.7 on child labour, slavery and trafficking, Goal 4 on education, Goal 5 on gender equality;
  7. Recognise the growing importance of business sector, work towards strengthening policy and implementation for increased corporate social responsibility with zero tolerance for child labour, trafficking and slavery in the supply and value chains;

#### **Way Forward**

To decide on how the PWB Group can work effectively by forming an effective Core Group, supported by a Secretariat.

To also decide the host country for the next regional and global meeting and mobilising of necessary resources for the same.

S. No.	Name	Country	Signature
1.	Fawzia Koofi	Afghanistan	
2.	Nazmul Haque Prodhan	Bangladesh	
3.	Fazilatun Nasa Bappy	Bangladesh	
4.	Ms. Kamrun Nahar Chowdhary Lovely	Bangladesh	
5.	Ms. Hosne Ara Lutfia Dalia	Bangladesh	
6.	Mr. Md. Israfil Alam	Bangladesh	
7.	Ms. Nurjahan Begum	Bangladesh	
8.	Ms. Ummey Razia Kajol	Bangladesh	
9.	K.C. Tyagi	India	
10.	Bhagwanth Khuba	India	
11.	Ravi Prakash Verma	India	
12.	Dilli Chaudhary	Nepal	
13.	Arvind Kumar Arunachalem	Sri Lanka	



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