Project Name: **Safe Word - Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Campaign in India**

Institution: The Graduate Institute, Geneva

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Location and Dates: Telangana, India, May 15, 2020 – August 30, 2020

Partners: Civil Society of India, Telangana State Government

**Background**

With India being home to more than 450 million children, it comes as a great responsibility for the country to protect these children from any kind of danger. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) in India is rampant, affecting four children every hour (BBC, 2017). A survey (2017) conducted by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights revealed that 53% of children reported having been through a form of sexual abuse. CSA commonly occurs in places like schools, where children spend most of their time during the day. Majority of private and public schools do not encourage sex education or workshops on safe and unsafe touch. In some states of India, it has been banned by the government reasoning it to be offensive to Indian values. The repercussions of unimportance given to making children differentiate between safe and unsafe touch leads to many of them being easy targets to abuse, hence, giving rise to problem. In 2016, 34.4% cases were registered under the Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, 2012. However, many cases also go unreported in the country.

**Personal Experience and Need Analysis**

Drawing from our personal experience, having been to several schools over the past few years in the state of Telangana and talking to children about safe and unsafe touch, it came as a surprise that a large number of them were learning a new concept.

India has a young population with 41% less than the age of 18 (Census, 2011) and are often referred to as the future of the country’s growth. This juxtaposing with unrestrained child sexual abuse, undermines peace in the country as sexual abuse is a form of violence. This form of violence has a negative mental and physical impact on children which may last a lifetime and bearing negative psychological and social consequences. Survivors experience effects such as shame, guilt and self-blame, eating disorders, anxiety, dissociative patterns, repression, denial, sexual problems, and relationship problems. Hence, standing as an impediment to the growth of both children and the country. This project aims to achieve goal raising awareness among children to prevent sexual abuse in an attempt to ensure maintaining of peace and insulating them from sexual violence.

**Project Description**

The problem of CSA in schools can be tackled by conducting regular workshops on safe and unsafe touch. While State Governments itself are restrained by human and resources, the system is encouraging of civil society organisations in driving the importance of sexual safety. This project aims to target government schools in the state of Telangana¹. Each workshop will last for 90 minutes. Through a Train-the-Trainer model, our project will use

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¹ Contact established between the civil society and state education authorities of Telangana
approved Prevention of Sexual Abuse techniques, tailor-made to be delivered for children between the ages of 6-14. Once facilitators are sufficiently well-versed in this process, these trainers will then conduct sessions for children in schools with the help of theoretical training received by them as well through the development of learning aids such as posters.

**Project Design**
A typical workshop would cover a module detailing the following:
- Understanding private body parts for both genders
- Safe and Unsafe touch
- Rules to follow when in an uncomfortable situation such as ‘**Scream** and say no’, ‘**Run** to safe place’, ‘**Tell** a trusted person’.
- Other general rules to follow around strangers such as not accepting food items or gifts.
- Sensitization on gender, and highlighting of ‘protecting oneself and others.’
- Information about Childline, a service that helps children in India from abuse.

**Expected Outcomes**
*For children:*
- The workshops aim to liberate children, make them more knowledgeable and informed.
- It will help the children differentiate between safe and unsafe touch in order to protect themselves from any kind of sexual abuse which will mitigate negative health consequences among them.

*For schools:*
- Workshops on CSA will enable schools to build a sense of trust among their stakeholders (such as parents) and deem themselves responsible. This will create a safe environment for schools which will encourage them to reach their full potential.
- Due to responsibility and sensitization that takes places by conducting workshops, it promotes a greater school attendance among children, leading to better learning outcomes.

**Future Impact and Sustainability**
These workshops will help children stay safer and be discerning of their rights in protecting their dignity. Our project submission for the Davis Peace Prize will also seek to create an advocacy campaign that focusses on policy makers and the need to make CSA mandatory. Moreover, these workshops would contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals targets of Early childhood development, universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education, gender equality and inclusion.

As children understand sexual abuse, they would not only be protecting themselves but also not be potential perpetrators. This would help the country’s rate of sexual abuse decline and enable a great sense of values of sensitization and respect. With this, the country would move a step closer to ending this form of violence and promote peace.