In a world where street and working children lack adult care and protection, where their lifestyle is characterized by struggle for survival and where they are vulnerable to harassment, assault, abuse and exploitation, their difficulties are further aggravated by negative attitude of general public towards them. In such a scenario, Butterflies with the support from South Asia Regional Initiative Equity Support Program (SARI/EQP) have tried to create an environment where children have better control over their lives, are able to voice their ideas, opinions and views on issues of their concern and are able to receive ample encouragement for a meaningful and secured future.

The support came in the form of South Asia Regional Follow up Training Workshop that was held in Chennai on 1st and 2nd December 2005. The workshop provided children with skills to write analytical and objective articles on subjects of their concern. All the articles included in this issue were written by children during the training workshop thus revealing the passion of each child from South Asia to make a world fit for children. With pride we declare—

**OUR VOICE**

South Asian Children’s Times

In Andaman & Nicobar Islands one of the major problems faced by children is the lack of teachers and especially children. Many schools were destroyed that had a major impact on the education of children. However some schools survived the disaster and are now centres of learning. Children face lot of problems in these schools. First and foremost problem is related to classrooms. Due to the earthquake, cracks have developed in the walls of classroom. As a result, children of different sections like 1st, 2nd, 3rd sit together and study in one classroom. There are too many children in one classroom which is not in their favour as they are unable to study. Children feel that the prevailing situation is not beneficial for them as neither the students are able to understand anything nor the teachers are able to teach efficiently. The general feeling of the children of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is that, if the conditions remain the same, then children have a dark future ahead of them.

The teachers, on the other hand, justify the prevailing situation by saying that there is no other option for them as no repairing work is being carried out either by the school or by the government authorities. Another major problem faced by children is the lack of teachers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Number of teachers died in Tsunami and those who survived have fled the islands. Some of the teachers have left the islands due to excessive pressure from the government. This lack of teachers in Andaman and Nicobar Islands has created lot of problems for children and they feel that if this problem is not solved then the future of children of Andaman and Nicobar Islands would surely be destroyed.

Thus to bring light into our lives, we children of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, urge the government to look into our problems seriously and take necessary and appropriate actions to rectify it.

**A GLANCE INTO THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN OF SOUTH ASIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Exclusively breastfed (&lt;6 months)</th>
<th>Breastfed with Complementary food (6-23 months)</th>
<th>Still breastfeeding (20-23 months)</th>
<th>Underweight</th>
<th>Wasting</th>
<th>Stunting</th>
<th>Moderate &amp; severe</th>
<th>Stunting &amp; Severe</th>
<th>Moderately &amp; Severe</th>
<th>Severe &amp; Moderately &amp; Severe</th>
<th>Severe &amp; Moderate &amp; Severe</th>
<th>Vitamin A supplementation coverage rate (6-59 months)</th>
<th>% of children under 5 years not consuming iodized salt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tbody>
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*Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified in the column heading. Source: The Status of World’s Children, UNICEF, http://unicef.org/SOWC 06/tables

This data has been collated by adult editorial advisors
**Flood! Flood! Flood!**

B. Keerthi, 14 years and R. Rahman, 14 years, Jeeva Jyothi, Chennai, India

Two to three years before, people of Chennai used to yearn for rain, as there were no showers. However, recently heavy rains showed in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, which had a tremendous effect on people from diverse backgrounds. While on one hand, working people were busy to go to office as the roads were flooded due to floods, on the other hand students were also not able to go to school or colleges which affected their studies. In some areas, there was no electricity for more than a week. A poor people living in slums had to experience lot of problems as rain water flooded their homes and they lost their belongings, shelter and also their near and dear ones. Agriculturalists also had to face the brunt of heavy rains as the floods washed away their harvest. This also shows how Municipal Corporation did not take care of the drainage system.

Transportation was also affected because of heavy rain. Many roads were damaged that caused huge traffic jams. In such incidents, two buses got stuck in the floods that resulted in the death of all its 150 passengers. Railway tracks were also damaged as a result many trains had to be cancelled that affected the movement of people from one place to another.

Many cricket fans were also disappointed, as the one-day match between India and South Africa had to be cancelled. Their disappointment turned into agitation when the officials didn’t return their ticket money. Many have lodged a case against the officials in the high court and wait for a reply to prevail.

The government did take some measures so as to reduce the problems and difficulties faced by people but with no avail. For instance, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced small amount of money (Rs. 2000) to be given to flood affected people but the money didn’t reach them. As a result there were lot of protest and demonstration that took violent shape in many areas. Recently, President of India, Abdul Kalam Azad visited the flood-affected areas and requested the weather reporters and scientists to give prior information to public about floods so that they have time to shift to a safer place.

Despite of all these problems, relief work is going on with full force and people are trying to come back to their normal lives, which will take some time.

**Alcoholism And Family Problems**

Thilin Narbo, 15 years and Thilin Thivchen, 16 years, Leh Nutrition Project, Ladakh, India

Ladakh is in the extreme North of India – it has a population of 2 persons per km. Leh is cut off from rest of India for 6 months in a year due to heavy snow. At that time the temperature is minus 32 degrees Celsius. Due to long winters, youth don’t have work and most of the time is spent drinking alcohol. Drinking is the major problem faced in Ladakh as well. Alcoholism is not an inherited thing, it is due to a strange reason. Alcoholism is the problem of the home. Many youth commit suicide because of love affairs. Society is competitive and those unable to compete commit suicide. Indifferent youth who are not taken care of by their family commit suicide because of love affairs.

In the future, we should be stabilized and action should be taken to uphold family life. Regardless of age, sex and class, everybody should be given equal opportunities. Counselling services should be extended to a larger group of people.

We invite brothers and sisters to come forward and address this problem. If there is love, understanding and respect in the family, family members can speak and share their problems.

**Suicide**

Ruvini Tharanga, 14 years and Buddhi Prabha, 14 years, Kantha Shakhki, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Until recent times, Sri Lanka had the highest rate of suicide cases in the world. About 21,000 people commit suicide in Sri Lanka every year. Though suicide is very common among the youth, children and older people also commit suicide. They commit suicide by using various methods like consuming pesticides, hanging or jumping into the sea.

One of the main cause for suicide in Sri Lanka is war. Apart from war, loneliness is another reason for people taking up this drastic step. With nobody to talk to or share their problems, both young and old commit suicide. Another cause is the lack of sex education and lack of sensitivity on the part of the society to tackle the problems of the youth. Many youth commit suicide because of love affairs.

Society is competitive and those unable to compete commit suicide. Indifferent youth who are not taken care of by their family commit suicide because of love affairs.

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**A Glance into the Health of Children of South Asia**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>66</td>
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<td>48</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data refers to the most recent year available during the period specified in the column heading. Source: The Status of World’s Children, UNICEF, http://unicef.org/SOWC 06/tables

The data has been collated by adult editorial advisors.
**Problem of Transportation and Sanitation in Kabul**

Ahmad Khalid, 14 years, Aschiana, Kabul, Afghanistan

Presently, there are two major problems in Kabul city – one is transportation and another is sanitation. In the recent times, there has been a constant increase in the number of vehicles in Kabul that leads to road blockage. As a result students are not able to go to school or colleges on time and are able to reach back home on time. The same problem is faced by youth of our city who are not able to reach their offices on time and thus have to face lot of problems. Even ambulances get stuck in traffic jams, which create problems for the sick people, as they don’t get treatment on time thereby worsening their condition and sometimes even leading to death.

Another problem faced by the people of Kabul is sanitation. We children feel that Kabul needs proper drainage system. Our city should be clean and this is the duty of not only the government but of every inhabitant of Kabul. If we all join hands and put garbage in dustbins and in the right places we can solve this problem. There should be some rules and regulations so that our city is kept clean. If our city is clean then it will leave a good impression on foreigners otherwise they will think that Kabul residents are dirty people. Our prophet Mohammad Peace Be On Him says that cleanliness and sanitation are part of faith and we must avoid anything that is dirty as it can be harmful.

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**Possessing a Daughter is no Sin**

Rasy Khamam, 14 years, Mahila Development Centre, Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India

Sarita, 13 years happy go lucky, smart, intelligent girl would change into a shy quiet girl in the presence of her family members. Despite her parents being against her education, Sarita wanted to continue it and had aspirations to be successful in life. Sarita’s mother wanted her to leave her studies and do household work. Her parents were very strict and for smallest of mistakes they used to beat her very ruthlessly. One day while working in the kitchen, she lost her balance and fell on the burner. By the time her parents and neighbours reached the accident site, Sarita was 90% burned and they immediately took her to the government hospital. In the hospital, the neighbours were taking care of Sarita and not her family members. After a few days of suffering, Sarita died and thus left behind a thought to ponder over:

"Being a daughter is not a sin"

I am not a curse

**Child Trafficking**

Faisal, Rafiq, Al-Amin, Tofeef, Sharmane, Najma, Pakhi, Sei, Fatima, Daka, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, Bangladesh

Child trafficking is a big problem in Bangladesh. Every year thousands of children are transported to the neighboring countries of India, Myanmar and others through the 48 important border points in Bangladesh. Children are transported due to different reasons like poverty, lack of awareness, greed etc.

Falling in the trap of unsocial elements, children are becoming victims of trafficking. These people tempt children by offering them food, work, money, a chance to see different places (see picture below) and many a times children are forcibly kidnapped for the purpose of trafficking.

Kidnapped kids become camel jockeys, prostitutes and many a times their limbs are disabled or severed to make them beggars. Children who are put in the above mentioned professions are severely damaged both physically and mentally. For example, children who become camel jockeys are susceptible to handicaps and many a times die. Children in prostitution are victims of STDs and also the deadly disease of HIV-AIDS.

Though a few of the kidnapped children do return back, society does not accept them. If the children of Bangladesh are continuously subjected to such trafficking, the society of Bangladesh is going to be severely affected.

To prevent such trafficking the authorities have to take strict measures and apply the law, apart from creating public awareness against trafficking of children.

**A Glimpse into the Health of Children of South Asia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% of infants with low birth weight</th>
<th>% of Children (1996-2004) who are</th>
<th>% of under-fives (1994-2004) suffering from</th>
<th>Vitamin A supplementation coverage rate (6-59 months)</th>
<th>% of households consuming iodized salt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-2004*</td>
<td>Exclusively breastfed (0-6 months)</td>
<td>Breastfed with complementary food (6-12 months)</td>
<td>Still breastfeeding (20-23 months)</td>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>Wasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
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This data has been collated by editorial advisors
Language might be different but feelings are the same. From the bottom of our heart we would like to thank all the correspondents and adult facilitators from six South Asian countries for their commitment, interest, and passion towards South Asian Children’s Times. It is because of their support and best wishes that we have reached so far and are now bringing out its fourth issue. It has been an enjoyable experience to complete this paper with such enthusiastic support.

We would like to thank our readers and well-wishers for their continuous support and encouragement.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the assistance we have received from the following individuals who have provided consistent support and encouragement in the transcription of South Asian Children’s Times in different languages:

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Our Bank: Safique Alam, 16 years, MJCC, Kolkata, India

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