SRI LANKA

Raising Awareness of Child Rights among teenagers on the effective use of modern technology

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1 Frame of Reference

1.1 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a multi-national multi- ethnic, multi- cultural and multi- lingual country with the population of 20 million which proudly claims free education from kindergarten to university level purely provided by the government as well- fare means which includes free text books, free uniform materials, free mid-day meals, free transport and some cases bursaries to the children. Nevertheless, Sri Lanka has ratified the Convention of the Rights for the Child (CRC) in 1991 to ensure the implementation of Child Rights in broader spectrum. The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) was established in 1998 by way of an act of parliament as one of the arms to ensure CRC operations in line with UN expectations. The Child Rights Conventions adopted in Sri Lanka focus mainly on provision, protection and participation in both the national and sub-national levels. Provision of education is also considered one of the most important Child Right components that are being linked with other aspect of socio economic conditions. Therefore the government of Sri Lanka has given priority for the provision of education at all levels.

1.2 The Educational system of Sri Lanka

The present educational system of Sri Lanka derives from the British educational system, which was introduced by the British colonial masters in the 19th century. The British colonial government established colleges for boys and girls separately. These colleges consisted of primary schools, lower secondary and higher secondary schools. In 1938 the education in government schools made free of charge as consequence of the Universal Franchise granted in 1931. Subsequently many government

schools called Maha Vidyalayas were
started in all parts of the country. The medium of education of Maha Vidyalaya's
was either sinhala or tamil.

Today primary education lasts six years, after which the pupils sit a scholarship examination. Those who passed scholarship examination qualify themselves to be admitted to popular schools and are granted monthly financial support until they pass out from the university. After primary education there is junior secondary education which lasts for five years, after which pupils have to sit government examination namely G.C.E. ordinary level to qualify for senior secondary education which last another two years. Then comes the competitive university entrance examination which is called G.C.E. advanced level examination.

Those who are not admitted to the universities can either enter vocational technical schools or be employed in companies or in government departments as apprentice or trainees. They can also pursue higher education as external students of traditional universities or at the Open University of Sri Lanka. It was established in early 1980's with the idea of conferring degrees and diplomas to the working population who can do part-time studies by paying tuition fees. Medium of study in schools today is either sinhala or tamil depending on the native language. The first language and the mathematics are compulsory subjects. All primary junior secondary pupils get their schools uniforms and text books free of charge from the government. In the universities the medium of study of the Medical and engineering faculties are in english and, in other faculties it can be sinhala, tamil or english depending on the university. Some universities do have post graduate institute that confer second degrees, for example Post Graduate Institute of Medicine attached to the University of Colombo. In addition these system lots of private international schools are being introduced to the present day education.

1.3 Taking Child Right seriously

Majority of the parents, principals and teachers have acknowledged that children's rights are integral to the mission of education. Fernekes has written numerous pieces on children's rights (1994, 2000, and 2001) including an article called "Why study children's rights?" (2000). Garcia (1994) calls for human rights in the pluralistic classroom and Cohen states that: "We have stifled our children - and thus our socie-

ty - for too long. Educators need to reaffirm their commitment to the child and to the vision of the child as the rejuvenating force of the future." (Cohen, 1993: 795). The needs of homeless students are addressed by Gracenin (1994) and by Vissing, Schroepfer and Bloise (1994). Des Dixon goes into some detail regarding children's rights and abuses of those rights, stating that "Children are the most exploited, overworked, and underpaid class in society. Children - not old people or women or any racial group - are the poorest members of society (and) are the last visible minority without human rights." (Des Dixon, 1994: 362). He then describes children's involvement with prostitution, drug dealing, and war as examples of ways in which they are abused. In fact, the gross abuse of children is widespread at national and international levels and includes malnutrition, starvation, child labor, slavery, forced prostitution, and infanticide. A closer examination of these phenomena reveal disturbing patterns: the majority of abused children are female, dark-skinned, and/or poor. Such abuse is particularly horrifying when we consider that children need to be cared for, nurtured and loved. We believe that, like ourselves, most parents regard their children as precious gifts, and that all of us from individual citizens to national governments should be concerned about all children. Teachers and parents can play a role in publicizing and reducing such abuses if they are adequately informed about them. A number of teachers have focused upon the need to make education more relevant to students and to have it promote justice, equity, citizenship and social responsibility (Cohen, 1993). The 25th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools reported that 91% of respondents rated as "Very High" or "High" an item which calls for the knowledge and skills "to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1993). How should teachers and parents respond to the shocking and overwhelming abuses of children's rights which occur in our nation and throughout the globe? First of all, regardless of where our students were born, we have the ethical obligation to educate all of them to the best of our ability (Children's Defense Fund, 2002; Fernekes, 1999).

2. Purpose

2.1 CRC and information technology
Although both education and CRC implementations are considered as priority programme of the government of Sri Lanka, still there are a number of CRC related issues dilemmas and problems that are can be highlighted in many ways particularly in the field of education and especially in schools. Information and communication technology (ICT) has become part and parcel in teaching and learning process in all education institutions. Furthermore advance technology also has some own impact when it comes to CRC operations in the provision of school education. As ICT has been considered one of the core subjects as well as cross cutting subject in the school curriculum the students are widely encouraged to use the internet for their learning purposes. It can see the school going children especially at their teenage learn to use

internet with keen interest for their academic purposes which sometimes leads to some ill- effects such as sexy photos; SMS-bullying, bad use of Face book etc. These actions became a dilemma in the society as a whole specially in schools where grown – up teenage children are studying. Therefore batch 13 Sri Lanka team members selected this title for its change project: *Raising awareness of Child Rights among teenagers on the effective use of Modern Technology.*

The change project will mainly focus on participation and address the following logical dilemmas to show how vulnerable teenagers are both at home and in schools: Modern technology has its own ill effect in the given context of the society. Teenagers become the victims from the ill effect of the IT. The school itself cannot protect the teenagers from the ill effect of IT.

This is a poster designed by the National Child Protection Authority of Sri Lanka which   inform about impact of Modern Technology.

2.2 The Change project

The Change Agents realized the project for change on effective use of modern technology (ICT) in the Sri Lanka schools targeting teenagers needs to promote the CRC concepts effectively. The teachers and the parents are the main players in the context of education. The change project was conducted in two project schools, Ramanathan Hindu Vidyalayain Colombo and Sheetha Devi Balika Vidyalaya in Kandy. Kothai Nagularajah is the principal of Ramanathan Hindu Vidyalaya and Mrs. Nanyana Aberathne is a teacher at Sheetha Devi Balika Vidyalaya , both schools are girls schools.

The aim of our project was:

- to raise awareness on Child Right Convention in a Sri Lankan context
- to integrate 'Child Rights" into the ICT teaching and learning in schools
- to sensitize teenagers not to become vulnerable when using modern technology
- to sensitize parents on the Child Right Convention and the impact on ICT
- to promote Child Rights Promotion activities continuously in the schools

2.3 Why teachers, parents and student leaders become Change Agents?

Teaching at its core is a moral profession, many teachers interact with students' personal issues and vulnerabilities, as well as social pressure and values, to engender a sense of frustration and force a reassessment of possibilities. Both parents, teachers and student leaders can lead change processes because they are:

- Resource providers
- Instructional specialists
- Learning facilitators
- Mentors
- Leaders
- Data Coach
- Catalyst for Change
- Members of the society

3 Methodology/Activities

3.1 Access to the arena: Preliminary survey on child right understanding

The study aims to examine teenager's attitudes, skills and knowledge on child rights and their suggestions to overcome issues pertaining to protecting child rights within the classroom when learning ICT. In order to understand the level of interest of the teenagers and their communication practices to minimize child rights violation within the classroom, the study was conducted in the two project schools.

3.2 The questionnaire

A well structured questionnaire was introduced to teenagers of the project schools. The questionnaire developed was pre-tested with a sample and was used for collecting further information. 86 trainee students out of 102 students of the upper secondary school children were interviewed with the questionnaire within a day. Three trained enumerators, with the assistance of a deputy principal and the principal of the school facilitated the process. The focus group discussion which was held with

16 randomly selected teenage students provided comprehensive information about the schools, CRC their ICT curriculum, effect of modern technology issues, cultural factors government policies remedial activities etc.

3.3 The findings of the survey

The findings of the survey were based on the answers given by the 86 teenage students' for 20 questions

1. The awareness about the Convention of Child Rights was 28%.
2. 87% thoroughly believed that the awareness of Child Rights was essential for teenagers, parents as well as teachers
3. 81% stated that there was a responsibility to take first action when violating a Child Right, in order to ensure the mental well being and security of the child.
4. Majority of teenagers believed that the best solution for committing an ICT related offence by a child was to discuss with the child rather than informing parties responsible for the child.
5. 66% believed that the opinion about subjecting children to Corporal punishment was an unnecessary method while 34% believed that it was good when there were no alternatives.
6. Majority believed that the Classroom should always be ICT friendly than Child Friendly.
7. Majority of teenagers expected that the teacher-student relationship in the Child rights club within the Classroom should be a Student-Centered one.
8. 87.5% of the majority expected that the most appropriate strategy that used in order to protect Child Rights within the Child right club was to act according to the differences and needs of the children.
9. The measures that the teenagers could take to protect rights of the child were,
- Accepting and appreciating the child's views on all occasions. both in home and schools
- To listen the child
- Pay equal attention to every child.
- Give opportunities for the child to think, act, express her/himself independently
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of Child Rights by both parties. in learning process.

3.4 Limitations of the survey

1. Lack of background information about the CRC , which was not available or accessible
2. Some of the questions in the questionnaire were not sufficiently specific which has led to different interpretations by the respondents.
3. Since this was only a baseline questionnaire, in-depth information could not be obtained, which limited the analysis. A systematic study would be required to assess the views and knowledge of the teenagers about the CRC and current approaches in teaching ICT in detail.
4. Lack of socio economic and demographic information obtained from informants constrained a sound analysis
5. Due to the limitation of the length of the report that has to be considered, only a few important areas could be discussed in detail while other areas are discussed only briefly.
6. The child rights clubs were not utilized to clarify or gain a deeper understanding of the matters inquired into by the questionnaire, due to the lack of preparedness and time constraints and parental participations.

3.5 Activities planned for our target groups:

- Raising Awareness on CRC targeting teachers, students particularly teenagers and parents on Child Rights
- Forming and activating Child Rights Clubs
- Exhibition on Child right tree
- Sensitization of parents on CRC
- Continuous Monitoring on the effective use of ICT
- Model Class practice on the effective use of ICT
- Special projects for teachers on the rights of Children
- Activities on effective use of IT
- 'No to Corporal Punishment' project
- Group assignments on CRC and ICT usage
- Internal Monitoring On Child right

4. Results

4.1 The main result
The main result is that the co curricular on ICT activities is now fully linked with Child Rights. The schools will practice Child Rights Promotion activities continuously specially for teenagers and we do hope that parents will understand the co- role in assisting for learning ICT through modern Technology for the teenagers.

4.2 The activities of the change project and their results

The team planned and organized activities at the two schools. We like to present the different themes and describe their results.

4.3 Awareness on Child Rights:

Awareness was given to the teacher, teenagers and the parents and the management body of the School. Basically the 'selected articles' from the convention were given to the teenagers The teachers were allowed to clarify all the misconception about the child right in Sri Lankan context. The management body also supported the theme and the effort.

Second meeting was with the Women Empowerment Authority team. The president of the college encouraged the team with his fullest cooperation. The Authority team had brought their leaflets regarding the child right improvement. It was commended by the teachers. Awareness was given to the teenagers through organizing Child Right Club. The selected members of teenagers were encouraged to take the lead role as indicated the following:

- Child rights should be included into the teaching of ICT subject
- Child rights should be included into the curriculum and co-curriculum activities
- Extra activities should be encouraged. in the Child right Clubs
- Special day should be allocated for the Child Right effort in line with ICT teaching and learning in the schools
- Visible mottos should be placed in the college to sensitize the teenagers
- Continuously Child rights clubs should be monitored

The teenager's agreed to all and certain things were discussed according to the school context.

4.4 Child Rights Model Clubs

The teenagers demonstrated a model clubs on the selected elements of child rights. Only, 15-20 teenagers were allowed in the class. A model trained teacher on CRC explained a theme on 'Effective use of Modern Technology in Sri Lankan Schools'. While explaining the following were expected:

- flexible questioning and answering time
- student participation and engagement
- teacher responsive time and parental involvement in ICT learning
- teacher and parents feedback on Teenagers
- student motivations in learning ICT through modern technology

Each teenager was allowed to act like a role model. Other teachers were impressed by the model Child Rights clubs.

4.5 No Corporal Punishment project

The Schools prepared a leaflet and distributed among the community. The school believes that corporal punishment is the root of all discrimination in society. What this school project analysis of corporal punishment, its background, and the effects and outcomes on our society. Then it carefully proposes culturally-relevant, socially-progressive responses to developing holistic, caring, and supportive responses to discipline that all adults - parents, teachers, and others - can stand to learn from.

The corporal; punishment was completely rejected by the entire community. The following are identified as punishment: Spanking, slapping, smacking, pulling ears, pinching, shaking... Hitting with rulers, belts, wooden spoons, extension cords, slippers, hairbrushes, pins, sticks, whips, rubber hoses, flyswatters, wire hangers, stones, bats, canes, or paddles... Forcing a child to stand for a long period; hold an uncomfortable position; stand motionless; kneel on rice, corn, floor grates, pencils or stones; retain body wastes; perform strenuous exercise; or ingest soap, hot sauce, or lemon juice THIS IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT. Anytime a young person is subjected to this treatment they are being abused. These forms of abuse are the cruelest, most unjust, and most ineffective treatment young people can receive.

4.6 Lessons for teachers and school community

The topic for these lessons was school and community responsibilities:

- Understanding the roles, rights and duties/responsibilities of the school community and acting accordingly; involvement of students in drawing up such codes of conduct for their class and school when they involve ICT.
- Promoting orderliness and discipline of the school e.g.: punctuality and attendance, and observance of expected norms of conduct by both students and teachers

- Enabling student participation in decision-making and therefore the learning of democracy, through student forums and other forms of representation
- Reducing violence
- Beautifying the school to give a sense of peace e.g.: flowers, vegetation both natural and man-made; works of art by students and artists on the walls; putting up inspiring quotations and 'thought for the day' by students and by 'great thinkers"
- Promoting cleanliness of the school – proper garbage disposal, good hygienic conditions etc; maintenance of building and furniture - colour washing and painting;
- Respecting the school culture of justice and fair play, shown through minimizing segregation or grouping children according to ethnicity, and giving equal opportunities to participate in school functions
- Ensuring equitable and respectful relationships between principal and staff; students and teachers ; among students; Learning problem solving and critical thinking, so that students can evaluate issues relating to ICT
- Getting supports from ICT experts to implement the co-curricular activities, especially for celebrating ICT events

Such activities will require sensitizing of teachers to draw out Child rights concepts in the curriculum as well as in understanding rights, justice, democracy and positive discipline for themselves. In addition, while it is possible to provide schools with a 'model' of a Child friendly school, it would be better if heads, teachers, students and community worked together to design their model for themselves, exploring a range of emphases for implementation. This would make an interesting exercise and give a sense of ownership.

4.7 The teachers and the school community members agreed on following community responsibilities:

- Ensuring good relationships between the school and parents (SDS /SDCs and PPA)
- Announcements of activities and notices in the school in all three languages
- Organizing exhibitions and displays on Child rights areas, and encouraging parents' and community members' visits to the schools
- Explaining Child Rights and its activities to the parents, including explaining by students as well as teachers
- Inviting different people from civil society and from the political arena to the school to have debates – e.g. 'Meet your ICT expert ' day
- Inviting parents to submit reports to the school on the development of their child with regard to Child rights concepts and activities, and vice versa; teachers meeting parents to discuss their child's development in learning ICT

- Linking with the media to promote school's activities in Child rights and jointly organizing events and competitions related to Child rights Ensuring schools are 'parent and community friendly', as well as 'child friendly'

5 Discussions and Reflection

The schools acknowledge to the team Srilanka13 is to continue the above for the future targeting teenagers. The members of the entire school community realized that promotion child right is their prime duty, not only in the classroom, but outside the classroom where child act and react. We feel like the teachers, teenagers and parents have deepened their understanding on the Child Right Convention in a Sri Lankan context. We believe that the teachers of our schools will practice the ICT main curriculum activities while ensuring child rights.

5.1 Challenges

The parents' religious and traditional perception doesn't respect the children's rights of expression and participation and there is lack of awareness on Child Rights among children and their parents The parents of teenagers are too busy with their work to earn a living, spending little time with their teenage children.

5.2 Some personal reflections

I will use CRC to solve problems in my school, the CR clubs will be organized in a democratic way, and I will make my school into a role-model school. My school is located in the center of the town, close to the main road. All the other schools can come to learn from us.

I received an application from one of the Change Agents from batch 3, but I never heard of CRC before. Now we have a network of Change Agents in Kandy and we are having contact weekly. We all are going to establish CRC in Kandy district. I like it very much because the student leadership will increase. Critical thinking and creative thinking will develop. In our parliament we only have 6% female members of the parliament. In the future we can change this situation. Many woman leaders will come from our school. If they go to the parliament, the men are very talk able, but now I will help to increase woman leadership. 52 % of the population is women.

In my view I have brightened up my knowledge. I will teach my students in a child friendly way. One of the former change agents from batch 10 told me about the programme, I searched the internet. I never heard about CRC before. After Lund and the training I do all my best to implemented CRC in my school in the best interest of the child.

Though a friend I got to know about the program. I searched the internet. My office is at the Ministry of Education and I work with children in the conflict area. I worry

about their situation and their rights. I was very keen on learning CRC. I knew about CRC because I work with Unicef.

6 Way Forward

We are happy to say that the change agents of Sri Lanka has formed a national network and also strengthening the regional network on CRC in Kandy.

This is now a solid path to walk on.

Through our project we will develop a better understanding for sinhalese and tamil cultures among our students at the two target school in the future. The school in Kandy is a sinhalese school and the school in Colombo is a tamil school. Because this batch represents both tamil and sinhalese change agents it will be easy to fulfill the aim of a peace building society. The Change Agents realized the project for change on effective use of Modern Technology in the Sri Lanka schools targeting teenagers needs to promote the CRC concepts effectively. The teachers, teenagers and the parents will still remain the main players in the future context of education.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for teenagers.

No	Content
1.	Being a teenager, what type of Learning Assistance do you expect from your teachers and parents …… …
2.	Being a teenager, do you think Child Rights Club is useful? ☐ yes ☐ no
3.	Do you often use, Internet, email, SMS and face book all the time? ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, for which subject do you study with the help of modern technology? ……………………………………………………………..
4.	When you meet at Child Rights Clubs what do you often do? ☐ Play games ☐ Fighting ☐ Discuss CRC ☐ Chatting ☐ Other
5.	Being a teenager, do you need to participate in ICT exchange activities? ☐ yes ☐ no -What type of activities? …… ………………………
6.	Being a teenager, have you ever been allowed to take part in any rights at school and at home? How many groups of rights are there? …… ……………………
7.	Being a teenager, have your observed the school internal rules and regulations? ☐ already ☐ not yet
8.	Being a teenager, what do you usually go for tuition classes? …… …………………

168

9.	Being a student, what do you usually do if you are not well taken care of by your parents (being abandoned)? ……… ………………
10	Are you often allowed to go out during holidays, festivities? ☐ yes ☐ no If yes, where do you often go? ……… ……………..
11.	Are you often taken to health center for periodic health check? ☐ ☐ yes no
12.	Being a student, what will you have to do when you encounter the teachers who do not respect your child rights? …………………..…… …………………
13.	Being a student, what do you have to do to realize the child rights? …… …………………