Regional Consultation
Child Helplines in Asia-Pacific 2019
Background

Child Helpline International hosts biennial Regional Consultations and biennial International Consultations. Regional Consultations allow Child Helpline International and its members to address strategic matters of interest to child helplines in the region. The Child Helpline International network in Asia-Pacific has benefitted from eight previous consultative meetings, the most recent one being held in 2017 in Kazakhstan.

The Ninth Regional Consultation of Child Helplines in Asia-Pacific was held on November 25 and 26, 2019 on the online platform Zoom. This was the first time that a consultative meeting was conducted online, to maximise cost effectiveness and accessibility for helplines.

We valued the participation of 9 child helpline members, both full and associate, from across this region. The agenda was made up of several different sessions, including an open session, in which a representative from Bantay Bata 163, the child helpline based in the Philippines, updated the network about their recent training on online child sexual exploitation and abuse, as part of the ACT to EVAC project. This theme of cooperation continued into the strategic sessions later in the day, where members highlighted the importance of Child Helpline International in strengthening partnerships and stimulating knowledge exchange between helplines, and agreed this role should continue and be further enhanced in the 2021-2023 strategy.

Sean Sok Phay, Regional Representative for Asia-Pacific, also led a session which summarised the outcomes of the 2019 Membership Survey and which stimulated discussions about the membership fee structure and the process of electing Supervisory Board Members.
Agenda

Monday 25 November 2019

09:00 — 09:15  Introduction
Opening remarks by Sean Sok Phay (Regional Representative for Asia Pacific), Madhav Pradhan (Deputy Regional Representative for Asia-Pacific), and Patrick Krens (Executive Director of Child Helpline International)

09:15 — 10:00  Child Helpline International Updates
Including WeListen programme, the new data strategy, the 2019 Global Voices Report and UNCRC 30 Campaign, as well as a TorontoLine update and introduction to the new eLearning module on inclusive practice

10:00 — 10:15  Question and answers

10:15 — 11:00  Open session
Session for members to share updates of their own and to exchange knowledge and best practices. Presentations include an update about the ACT to EVAC training in the Philippines

Tuesday 26 November 2019

09:00 — 09:30  2019 Membership Survey
Presentation on the outcomes of the 2019 Membership Survey, from Sean Sok Phay

09:30 — 10:45  Multi-annual planning 2021-2023
Presentation led by Patrick Krens, on the draft plan for the strategic period of 2021-2023. This session is also aimed at gathering input, feedback and suggestions from the members

10:45 — 11:00  Closing remarks
Closing remarks from Patrick Krens and Sean Sok Phay
Summary of Sessions

Child Helpline International Updates

During this session, the team at Child Helpline International provided a short overview of the work that has taken place in the organisation over the past year. Senior Programme Manager Richard Ombono began by sharing updates on the current programmes Child Helpline International is working on. Highlights include the establishing of child helplines in El Salvador, Panama and Benin, the strengthening of child helplines in the East and South Africa (ESA) region and continuation of programmes such as ACT to EVAC. Members were also updated on the launch of the new eLearning module on Inclusive Practice, part of the WeListen project.

Another highlight of this update session, was the presentation of the new data strategy by Director of Operations, Helen Mason. This strategy aims to improve the reliability of data submitted by child helplines through the collaborative development of a new data framework. As a result of this, Child Helpline International will be able to more readily identify trends at the global, regional and national levels and be better informed on which topics, issues and regions to focus programmes on. The strategy also seeks to improve the comparability of data through standardisation and training and, lastly it hopes to strengthen the network's contribution to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals, and other normative and practical goals, by incorporating such objectives within our data mapping.

During this session members provided input and feedback on this strategy, highlighting that a top advocacy issue should be online safety and issues faced by children and young people online. Some also suggested the increasing threat posed by climate should be a focused area of advocacy and be represented in the data submission. It was also suggested that helpline volunteers and counsellors who work closely with the data should also review the new data strategy. The next steps include a review by a number of sub-committees, and a final review from the whole network mid-2020, before launching to the network by the end of 2020.

Lastly, also part of this update from Child Helpline International, was a formal presentation of to the Global Voices Report, which presents 2017 and 2018 data from across the network, and a summary of the UNCRC 30th Anniversary campaign, with a presentation of the animation that was launched on November 20 2019 to commemorate this anniversary and to call for the international community to renew commitments to protect and promote children's rights.
Open Session

This session was set aside for members to facilitate discussions of their own, on a topic or issue of their choice. This was an opportunity for members to share updates and experiences and to get a better picture of some of the main issues that face children across Asia-Pacific.

The session began with a presentation from Bantay Bata 163, our child helpline member based in the Philippines. The presentation was about a recent training as part of the Advocate, Collaborate & Train to End Violence Against Children (ACT to EVAC) programme, which is coordinated in partnership between Child Helpline International and the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC). 151 participants attended this training, from government and non-government organisations, such as Plan International and International Justice Mission. According to Jingkie Ongan, Senior Social Worker at Bantay Bata 163, this was an extremely valuable opportunity to share knowledge and hear from other groups working in this field. With the most child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in the world, originating from the Philippines, it was a vital moment to reaffirm commitments and enhance national stakeholder collaboration in the Philippines specific to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). Bantay Bata 163 also carries out a significant amount of advocacy - largely through media and radio - and community outreach; talking to parents and providing them with information about abuse and where and how to report it.

More information about this training can be found [here](#).

Sean Sok Phay, Director of Child Helpline Cambodia also gave an update about the organisation’s work with UNICEF and the National Council for Children surrounding a new child protection law. The National Database for Social Welfare is aiming to involve Child Helpline Cambodia by incorporating the helpline’s data, so that informed decisions can be made to the new child protection law.
Membership Survey 2019

This half-hour session was led by Regional Representative Sean Sok Phay, who presented the findings of the 2019 membership survey. Participants were also encouraged to share their thoughts and feedback to supplement and expand on a number of different questions that arose from this survey. A summary of these discussions can be seen in the diagram below:

**The Role of Child Helpline International**

Members agreed the role of Child Helpline International should be to enable knowledge sharing between members, connecting members and assuring quality within the network. Many restated that the most valuable aspect of the network is the knowledge exchange and the strength each helpline gets from this as a result. It was suggested that the focus, should be reinforcing that strength. It was also agreed that the main/primary role of Child Helpline International should not include the raising of funds for members.

**Selection of the Supervisory Board**

This refers to revision of the election process so that all Supervisory Board Members are elected directly at the General Assembly. Many agreed that this would be a means to ensure a more open and participatory process.

**Membership Fee Structure**

The question was posed as to whether the fee should be tiered or in fact based on different income levels of the helplines. Members in turn raised a number of questions. One concern is that this will put more pressure on helplines to raise funds. Following this, it was clear that developing a service-based membership and fee model is the obvious next step. Patrick Krens indicated that further review from the Supervisory Board would take place, before a final vote by the membership at the General Assembly in September 2020.
Multi-Annual Planning Session 2021-2023

The final session of this year's Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation was a 2021-2023 strategic envisioning meeting. Input from the membership is vital for this multi-annual planning, and this session sought to gather feedback, thoughts and opinions of our members in Asia-Pacific so that the next strategic phase can begin to take shape. Below is a summary, which has been broken down into thematic areas of discussion.

Advocacy

It was widely agreed that Child Helpline International plays a key role in terms of advocacy on a regional and international level. Participants agreed support with advocacy from Child Helpline International is valuable. Regarding advocacy themes, members concurred that Child Helpline International should focus on Violence/abuse, Mental Health, Migration and Gender, Inequality and Inclusion, with particular emphasis on digital well-being and online safety and its links with all four of these themes. Members also agreed that a rising issue within this region, is the effect of climate change and natural disasters, about which they are receiving increased. This theme could also become a focus for Child Helpline International in terms of advocacy.

Regional presence

Members mentioned that the visibility and presence of Child Helpline International could be more prominent in the Asia-Pacific Region. Efforts should be made to improve brand recognition and promote the network. Members highlighted the importance of regional advocacy and cooperation between different helplines within the region, alongside strengthening and stimulating partnerships with other international organisations, which would be a good step on working towards this increased presence.

Youth Participation

All members felt that the Youth Advisory Council must be a key additional part of Child Helpline International at the governance level, and should continue to play a role in forming and shaping the vision and strategy of the organisation. They highlighted the importance however, of ensuring this is not done in a generic or tokenistic way. It was mentioned that integrated youth at a governance level requires greater commitment and greater resources. Youth must represent the diversity of children and young people and really integrate their voice into decision-making processes.

Fundraising

Participants agreed that the main role of Child Helpline International should not be to raise funds for members, however the organisation could play a role in passing fundraising information and guidance on to members. One member mentioned the possibility of a volunteer programme, whereby volunteers with fundraising expertise from helplines in higher income countries may visit and assist at helplines from lower income countries. It was agreed that technical support, such as help with quality assurance, data collection and advocacy, is more important than fundraising support.
Looking ahead

Following the discussions from this Regional Consultation, it was agreed that the cooperation in Asia-Pacific must not stop in the Regional Consultation but should continue through regular meetings and discussions. Members agreed that the online format worked well in conjunction with face-to-face meetings and it was suggested that, with some small technological improvements, more regional meetings could be held using the ‘Zoom’ online tool and could provide more frequent opportunities for members to exchange updates, knowledge and ideas.

As for the next steps, further work will be carried out by the team at Child Helpline International to gather the inputs of the rest of the membership regarding the new data strategy topics raised during the multi-annual planning session. This includes reviewing the feedback received during this meeting, as well as the Regional Consultations of Child Helplines in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and Northern Africa. There will also be a chance for members in the Americas and Caribbean region to offer their thoughts and opinions during their Regional Consultation to be held in Uruguay in March 2020. Both the Youth Advisory Council and the Supervisory Board met in Amsterdam in the latter half of 2019 and will also continue strategic discussions in 2020. In addition, various steering and sub-committees will have an opportunity to review all discussions and put forward a strategy that will be finally reviewed by the whole membership before a final launch at the International Consultation in September 2020.

All Asia-Pacific Members are invited to attend this International Consultation of Child Helplines in Asia-Pacific and we look forward to continuing these discussions over the course of 2020 and beyond.
Participants

- Kids Helpline
  Australia

- Child Helpline 1098 – Aparajeyo Bangladesh
  Bangladesh

- Child Helpline Cambodia
  Cambodia

- Shwe Yamin Foundation
  Myanmar

- CWIN Nepal
  Nepal

- Bantay Bata 163
  Philippines

- Tinkle Friend Helpline
  Singapore

- Childline Thailand
  Thailand

- Child Helpline Vietnam
  Vietnam