

Child Helpline International

Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation

January 18-21, 2005

KHF Executive Director's Report



Introduction

Child Helpline International (CHI) is a foundation registered in the Netherlands with the purpose of advocating for child helplines throughout the world and providing a forum and resource network for its member child helplines. It currently has 70 member childlines in 61 countries that collectively receive 10 million calls or contacts annually. CHI's vision is to support the development of childlines to achieve 39 million contacts annually in 177 countries.

CHI was founded in 2001 by the founder of Childline in India, Jeroo Billimoria and is funded by Plan Nederland (the Dutch branch of Plan International, a major children's aid organisation serving developing countries) and Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (the foundation for children's welfare stamps in Holland). The CHI foundation is governed by a 12 member board. Board membership is currently due for review at the next International Consultation (whole world meeting) to be held in March 2005.

At the CHI International Consultation in 2003 it was resolved to hold regional meetings of member helplines and the first Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting (covering childlines in countries from Egypt to New Zealand) was held in Tokyo between 18 and 21st January 2005. What's Up was represented at this meeting by Grant Taylor, Executive Director of the The Kids Help Foundation Trust.

Two public forums were held at the conclusion of the meeting (one in Tokyo, the other in Osaka) to support the work of childlines in Japan, which are struggling with public and governmental attitudes towards the rights of children and the role of NGOs in providing services for children. Grant was asked to speak at these meetings, along Jeroo Billimoria and the representatives from childlines in India, Vietnam and Mongolia.

Programme

The meeting programme involved:

- introductions by all childlines present to their work,
- site visits to a child adventure playground in Tokyo and two Tokyo childlines,
- a presentation and discussion of a strategic plan for CHI developed by McKinsey,
- a presentation and discussion of the work of the CHI taskforce on principles, standards and practices,
- a presentation and discussion of the work of the CHI taskforce on data collection
- development of a plan of action for childlines in the Asia-Pacific Region
- a special session involving presentations by delegates from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and India on the impact of the tsunami on children in their countries, the work their childlines are doing to assist those affected, and how other childlines can assist them in this work (facilitated by Grant Taylor)

Participants

Organisations participating were:

- Australia (Kids Help Line)
- China (Dept of Psychology, Beijing Forestry University)

- Egypt (represented by the Egyptian Ambassador to Japan – Egypt is currently in the planning stages of establishing a childline)
- Hong Kong (The Kong Kong Council of Social Service)
- India (Childline India Foundation)
- Indonesia (Plan Indonesia)
- Japan (Childline Support Centre Japan/Zenseikyo Foundation)
- Korea (National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse)
- Mongolia (National Authority for Children of Mongolia)
- Nepal (CWIN-Nepal/Nepal Telecom)
- New Zealand (What’s Up, Kidsline)
- Pakistan (Madadgaar Children and Women Help Line)
- Phillipines (Bantay Bata 163)
- Sri Lanka (National Child Protection Authority/Sarvodaya Child Development Programme Sri Lanka)
- Thailand (The Juvenile Observation and Protection Centre, Songkhla)
- Vietnam (Plan in Vietnam/Viet Nam Committee for Population, Family and Children)

CHI was represented by Jeroo Billimoria, Executive Director and Mabel Wong, Asia-Pacific Region Coordinator.

The countries represented can be grouped by human development index (“developed” – e.g. New Zealand, and “developing” – e.g. Nepal) and the childlines by stages of development (“build” – e.g. Egypt; “existing but constrained” – e.g. India; and “establishment” – e.g. Australia).

Overall Impressions

The meeting revealed an inspiring collection of competent and committed people working for the welfare of children in their countries. They showed an exceptional level of open-ness, honesty, trust, patience and respect for one another.

There was a strong sense of the Asia-Pacific Region being different in its needs from Europe especially and some anxiety about CHI as an organisation remaining aware of and sensitive to the needs of childlines in this region.

Australia and New Zealand stood out as developed nations with well-established childlines. The comparative figures show that New Zealand’s children and young people are well-serviced by childlines, with actual calls received in 2003 exceeding CHI’s theoretical country target¹ by a factor of nearly 3. The increase in the number of calls made to What’s Up in 2004 has inflated this factor even further. Only the Czech Republic and Zimbabwe exceed this level of utilisation of childlines.

What’s Up and Kids Help Line in particular are seen as leaders in the region in terms of training and data collection and many of the other childlines are looking to us for assistance with these aspects of their own development.

¹ Calculated from the country’s human development index, telephone density and size of the under-20-years population.

CHI is still proving its value but has a credible strategic plan and what appear to be good leadership and governance principles. The early work it has done on developing standards and data collection is promising. There is a manifest need for an organisation like CHI among the developing nations and it seems likely to succeed sufficiently in meeting this need to have a good future. It has further to go in convincing developed helplines of the benefits of involvement, especially in the United States. The low participation in CHI of US childlines in contrast with European childlines perhaps reflects differing national attitudes towards the inherent benefits of international cooperation.

What's Up International Comparisons

A benefit of CHI membership is access to comparative data on childlines around the world. From this it can be seen that the number of calls made to What's Up alone in 2004 (262,241) exceeded CHI's national annual call target (65,958) for New Zealand by a factor of 3.97. Only 14 of the 59 countries with childlines covered by CHI exceed the CHI target. Example comparison figures are 1.68 for Kids Help Line in Australia, 2.1 for all childlines in the United Kingdom and 1.14 for all the childlines in Sweden. Although it is possible to question the validity of the CHI target calculations, this index should apply approximately equally to all countries and shows that What's Up is exceptional in its level of engagement with the children and young people of its home country.

It can also be seen from the comparative data that What's Up's cost per call answered (USD 4) is very low.

Grant Taylor
Executive Director
4 February 2005