



NATIONAL CONSULTATION

HEALTH & WELL BEING OF CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Date : 27-05-2021

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS
5th FLOOR, CHANDERLOK BUILDING, JANPATH, NEW DELHI-110001**

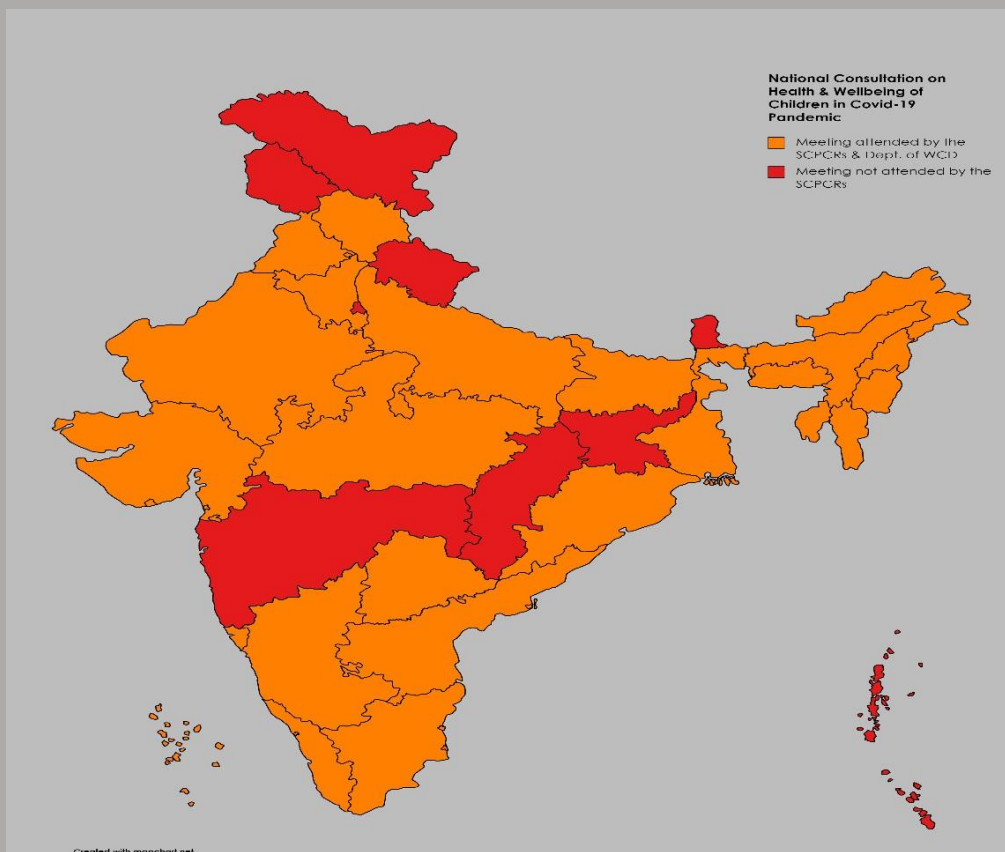
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INTRODUCTION

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) organised a one-day National Consultation (virtually) with all the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) on "*Health and well-being of children and adolescents in Covid-19 pandemic*". The consultation was conducted with an aim to discuss the adverse impact of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic on children and adolescents as India grapples with escalating virus cases in the second wave. The meeting further deliberated upon the preventive aspects to be undertaken to monitor and mitigate the risk factors for children in impending third wave of COVID-19 and its double mutant and various strains.

The Commission invited experts from Indian Academy of Paediatrics, RBSK- MoH&FW, NIMHANS, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) who enlightened the participants on various ways to prevent the adverse effects of covid-19 among children and adolescents. The Consultation was attended by 24 SCPCRs which include- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Goa, Bihar, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, West Bengal, Chandigarh, Pudducherry, Lakshdweep and Department of Women & Child Development of Daman & Diu.



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

The Consultation was initiated with an inaugural address by Shri Priyank Kanoongo, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) in which he highlighted the current scenario of Covid19 in the Country and appreciated the efforts of doctors and health workers in fighting this battle against the virus and ensuring that proper care is provided to every patient. He emphasized that appropriate measures must be taken to ensure that children do not become part of the transmission chain. He further elaborated on the efforts taken by the Commission like- seeking guidelines from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), for treatment of children, sought information on functioning of Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs), Paediatric Intensive Care Units (PICUs) and Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) from the States/ UTs keeping in view the adverse effects involved for infant and children in the impending third wave of COVID-19. In the end, he expressed his gratitude to the distinguished speakers in the panel Dr. Piyush Gupta, National President, Dr. Ramesh Kumar, President, Dr. G.V. Basavaraja, Hon. Secretary-General and Dr. Harish Kumar Pemde, Joint Secretary, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), Dr. Aparna Mukherjee, Scientist, Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases (ECD), Indian Council for Medical Research, Dr. Arun Kumar Singh, Head of Department of Neonatology, AIIMS, Jodhpur and National Advisor, RBSK, MoH&FW, Dr. Ranjan Kumar Pejaver, President, National Neonatology Forum (NNF) & Dr. Lallan Bharti, Vice President & HOD Paediatrics JPCH, Govt. of Delhi, National Neonatology Forum (NNF), Dr. Shekhar P Seshadri, Sr. Professor, Dept. Of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry & Dean, behavioural Sciences Division, NIMHANS and Members of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights- Sh. Yashwant Jain (Laws Relating to Children), Dr. R.G. Anand (Child Psychology & Sociology), Smt. Pragna Parande (Juvenile Justice), Ms. Rosy Taba (Child Labour) for being a part of this national consultation.

OPENING REMARKS

In the opening remarks of the session Dr. Piyush Gupta, National President along with Dr. Ramesh Kumar, President, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) at the outset appreciated various proactive measures taken by NCPCR in creating awareness amongst the community especially amongst the children on covid-19. In opening remarks, he spoke about multifarious issues and adverse effects of the virus on children's overall development, i.e., physical, social, emotional and psychological like- lack of social interaction and confinement within homes leading to stress and anxiety, increase in digital screen time leading to visual impairment and other mental health issues and lack of physical exercise resulting in increased

weight gain. In the end, he emphasized on the need of spreading awareness and ensure that proper protocols are followed to stop the spread of covid 19 infection in children. Dr. G.V. Basavaraja, Hon. Secretary-General, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) welcomed all the dignitaries, the State Commissions and other concerned stakeholders for joining the consultation.

The National Consultation was divided into five technical sessions¹: -

- ❖ **Technical Session-I:** Preventive aspects to be undertaken to monitor and mitigate the risk factors for children in covid-19.
- ❖ **Technical Session-II:** COVID-19 pandemic and children-an overview & strategies to reduce the risk factors.
- ❖ **Technical Session-III:** Dealing with children during Covid-19 times.
- ❖ **Technical Session-IV:** Welfare of new-borns and infants in Covid times.
- ❖ **Technical Session-V:** Protection & Mental Health Concerns of Children in the COVID Crisis- Implications for Intervention.

TECHNICAL SESSION-I

Preventive aspects to be undertaken to monitor and mitigate the risk factors for children in covid-19

The first technical session was taken by Dr. Harish Kumar Pemde, Joint Secretary, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP). In the session, he discussed in detail about the spread of corona virus amongst children. He stressed that Infants aged 0–1 years were significantly more likely to be infected than children aged 2–5 years and children aged 6–12 years. He further said, children with certain underlying medical conditions and infants (age <1 year) might be at increased risk for severe illness from SARS-CoV-2 infection. In the end, he discussed preventive aspects to be undertaken to monitor and mitigate the risk factors for children in covid-19 such as monitoring of symptoms at home like- fever, cough, sore throat, loose motion, body ache, refusal to feed and to make the environment safer for children by avoiding spaces that are close, crowded and involve close contact (3Cs). In these environments the virus appears to spread by respiratory droplets or aerosols more efficiently, so taking precautions, follow basics of good hygiene and following of proper protocols/

¹ Programme agenda of the consultation is enclosed as Annexure-I

guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare are even more important to ensure the safety of children and infants from the virus.²

TECHNICAL SESSION-II

COVID-19 pandemic and children-an overview & strategies to reduce the risk factors.

In the second technical session Dr. Aparna Mukherjee, Scientist, Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases (ECD), Indian Council for Medical Research gave a broad overview on covid 19 pandemic and shared her insights on severe impact of the second wave of Covid-19 on children in India. As per the data, India has reported a positivity rate of more than 10% in the second wave in children and infants (1-10 age groups). Also, 32 out of 36 states/UTs in the country reflected higher positivity rates in children and infants (1-10 age groups) in the second wave in April and May 2021, as compared to the first wave back in August and September 2020. She later took us through the possible interventions that could be done to mitigate the risk of covid for children like- following covid appropriate behaviour, spreading awareness among parents and caregivers about the disease, follow guidelines for management of paediatric covid-19 patients which has already been issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, vaccinate the parents and caregivers. She further stressed on the fact that the impending third wave might not severely affect the children but it is important that preventive measures are in place like- ramping up the infrastructure of healthcare system for children for mitigation and management of the third wave of COVID-19. In the end, she also spoke about the special concerns that children are facing since last year where they are confined in their homes unable to socialize with their peers, increase in screen time, no physical workout is proving to be deleterious for them and their mental well-being. So as parents we must ensure that the physical exercise is encouraged, limiting screen time and take care of their nutritious diet. She further elaborated on some unique concerns that has been raised during this pandemic where both the parents/caregivers were sick, where children have either lost one or both their parents/ caregivers during this pandemic. In such cases, the Commission has already come up with the guidelines and norms and its timely intervention has ensured the safety of these children. Further, the states should develop child care arrangements in hospitals so that they can be near to their parents, to initiate helpline numbers for such situations where both parents are infected with the virus. To provide proper care and

²Link for the presentation: https://ncpcrin-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/it_ncpcrin_onmicrosoft_com/Eis0ooHxZkZMpv_ycKxAObMBjmxXCKM83F9ucWc-IvnuXQ?e=nOZff5

arrangements to children who have either lost one parent/bread earner or both the parents have died due to covid-19.³

TECHNICAL SESSION-III

Dealing with children during Covid-19 times

The third technical session was taken by Dr. Arun Kumar Singh, Head of Department of Neonatology, AIIMS, Jodhpur and National Advisor, RBSK, MoH&FW. He shared the detailed information about the virus in Wuhan, China and then again in 2020. Clinically there was a lot of resemblance, the adult population getting infected, its spread through travel, its spread in 26 countries in 2020 and even vaccines were being manufactured against sars-covid as early as 2020. Though virus disappeared but it reappeared in 2020 in Wuhan and from there it spread out to the whole world. He further discussed its spreads and its effect on the human body. He also discussed the impact of the second wave and how it has led to a steep rise in panic and anxiety within the society and further suggested to scale up the health infrastructure for children and laid special emphasis on establishing a monitoring cell in every state and districts and accordingly advisories may be issued accordingly to avoid chaos during the impending third wave of Covid-19 which may affect children in large numbers. The district administration must be aware of the number of beds in the area, dedicated covid health centers, should be made and administrators everywhere should focus upon increasing at least 10% capacity for the pediatric patient. A new born child is equally susceptible to infection as 80-year-old and necessary steps should be taken to prevent the children from contracting covid.

TECHNICAL SESSION-IV

Welfare of new-borns and infants in Covid times

The fourth technical session was taken by Dr. Ranjan Kumar Pejaver, President, National Neonatology Forum (NNF) & Dr. Lallan Bharti, Vice President & HOD Paediatrics JPCH, Govt. of Delhi, National Neonatology Forum (NNF). The speakers in this session spoke about the adverse impact of covid 19 on overall development of children the first wave and in the second wave the incidents of new-born suffering due to covid has been far and few. Thus, India has seen anecdotal cases of new-borns dying due to covid disease. In the second wave, infants who are discharged and who are coming back with covid positive is postnatal acquired

³Link for the presentation: https://ncpcrin-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/it_ncpcrin_onmicrosoft_com/Eis0ooHxZkZMpv_ycKxAObMBjmxXCKM83F9ucWc-IvnuXQ?e=nOZff5

either at home or from the adults around them and even then, after they have come to the hospital they remain asymptomatic and did not have much problem and were discharged and further stressed upon the welfare of new-borns and infants during Covid times. He further suggested that new-borns have to be looked after with a very special surveillance and form a cell or care group in collaboration with the organisations to look after the infants whose parents had died due to covid. He further stressed on providing nutritious food to children, emphasize upon breastfeeding to ensure their safety from this virus. In the end, he assured that the National Neonatology Forum (NNF) will work with NCPCR and provide technical support or guidance for management and surveillance of the new-born or infants up to the age of one year.

TECHNICAL SESSION-V

Protection & Mental Health Concerns of Children in the COVID

Crisis- Implications for Intervention

In the final technical session Dr. Shekhar P Seshadri, Sr. Professor, Dept. Of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry & Dean, Behavioural Sciences Division, NIMHANS emphasized upon Protection & Mental Health Concerns of Children in the COVID Crisis. He asserted that the disease and mortality in the first wave for children was very low among children and infant but there were more psychological problems due to lockdown and restricted mobility. He further laid out the general psychological impact on children amid lockdown were psychological distress, loss of income and livelihood of the family, difficulty of enduring consequences of parental loss, risk of child sexual and other forms of abuses, disruption of children's daily routine, disruption of education, impact of online classes. He also stated that the lockdown has pushed the children and their families in difficult circumstances into more vulnerable position. He further explained the four risks which were encountered during the first wave and which are continuing in the second wave of the pandemic like-

- Suffering from hunger and burden of supporting their families leading to children being trafficked for labour.
- Children in difficult situation are at risk for sex trafficking.
- Increased risk of Child Marriage
- Increase risk of child sexual abuse and maltreatment

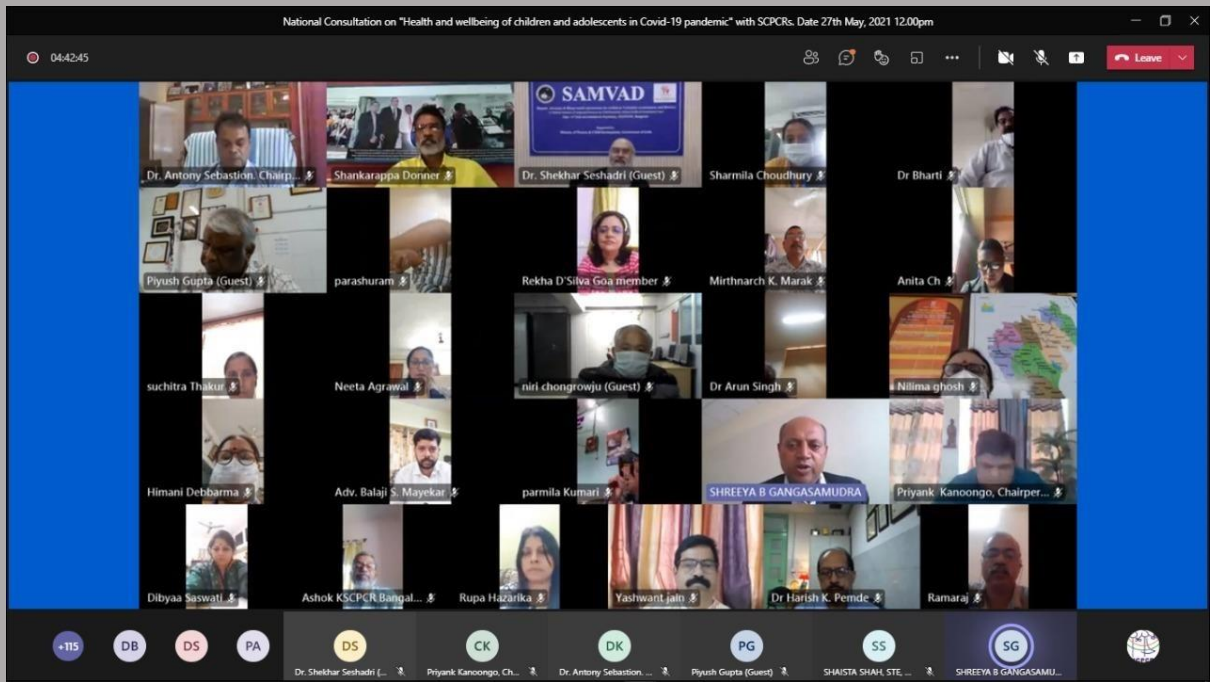
He further discussed various child protection interventions such as- scaling up the Child Care Institutions services which would serve as a supportive place for children in this time of crisis, capacitate Child Welfare Committees, ICPS Staff and other child protection functionaries to conduct systematic home studies to evaluate family capacities to provide optimum care for children, keep child at the centre of decision making and establish safe spaces in CCIs as a preventive and preparedness measures to avoid the child protection risks. He also laid down various mental health and well-being interventions for children living in institutions & Community like- Maintaining social connections, responding to children's covid related queries and confusions, maintenance of daily routine, engagement in developmental activities, anxiety management and referral to mental health services. In the end, he focused on strengthening hospital facilities before the third wave, to develop new or additional protocols for hospitalization of children and child care institutions in case of an outbreak of within CCIs, planning creative solutions for isolation for children prior to admitting them in CCIs and develop materials and methods for psychoeducation of children to help them cope with illness if infected.

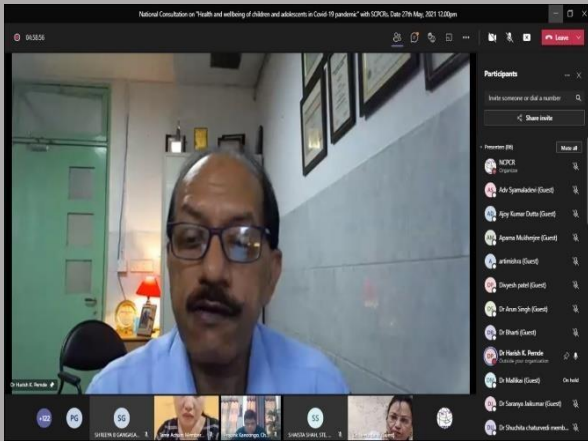
OPEN HOUSE DISCUSSIONS

This consultation was followed by an open house discussion, where various queries and suggestions were received from the respective State Commissions on health and wellbeing of child and adolescent in Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to this, various recommendation /suggestions were collated from the experts and SCPCRS.

VOTE OF THANKS

Ms. Rupali Banerjee Singh, Member Secretary, NCPCR at the outset thanked Sh. Priyankanoongo, Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights for successfully organizing the National consultation on "*Health and well-being of children and adolescents in Covid-19 pandemic*". She also thanked the Chairpersons and Members of all the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRS) for attending the consultation and appealed for their cooperation in future. She expressed sincere gratitude to Indian Academy of Paediatrics for their support towards children. In the end, she thanked the experts for taking out time from their schedule and being a part of this consultation and sharing their valuable experiences and ideas with the participants to prevent children from covid-19 pandemic.







**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS
(NCPCR)**



**National Consultation on "Health and wellbeing of children and adolescents in
Covid-19 pandemic" with SCPCRs,**

PROGRAMME AGENDA

TIME	PROGRAMME DETAILS
12.00pm -12.05pm	Inaugural Session Inaugural Address by Shri. Priyank Kanoongo, Chairperson, NCPCR
12.05pm-12.15pm	Opening remarks by Dr. Piyush Gupta National President 2021, Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP) & Dr. Remesh Kumar President Elect, IAP
12.15pm-12.20pm	Setting the context and role of IAP by Dr G V Basavaraja Hon. Secretary-General, IAP
Technical Sessions	
12.20pm-12.40pm	Technical Session-1- <i>"Preventive aspects to be undertaken to monitor and mitigate the risk factors for children in covid-19"</i> Dr Harish Kumar Pemde Joint Secretary, IAP
12.40pm-1.00pm	Technical Session-2- <i>"COVID-19 pandemic and children-an overview & strategies to reduce the risk factors"</i> Dr. Aparna Mukherjee, Scientist E, Division of Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases (ECD), Indian Council of medical Research (ICMR)
1.00pm-1.20pm	Technical Session-3- <i>"Dealing with children during Covid-19 times"</i> Dr. Arun Kumar Singh, Head of Department of Neonatology AIIMS, Jodhpur and National Advisor, RBSK, MoH&FW
1.20pm-1.40pm	Technical Session-4- <i>"Welfare of new-borns and infants in Covid times"</i>

	Dr Ranjan Kumar Pejaver, President, National Neonatology Forum (NNF) & Dr. Lallan Bharti Vice President & HOD Paed JPCH GOVT of Delhi National Neonatology Forum (NNF)
1.40pm-2.00pm	Technical Session-5- <i>"Protection & Mental Health Concerns of Children in the COVID Crisis- Implications for Intervention"</i> Dr. Shekhar P Seshadri, Senior Professor, Dept. of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry & Dean, Behavioural Sciences Division, NIMHANS
2.00pm-2.20pm	Open House Discussion
2.20 pm-2.30pm	Vote of thanks by Smt. Rupali Banerjee Singh, Member Secretary, NCPCR
2.30 pm	Closure of the Programme

Microsoft Teams Link for joining is -
https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_Zjk2MDg3YTUuYU50Y2VhLWJiODItMjU5Y2FiMTNjYzVh%40thread_v2/0?context=%7b%22id%22%3a%227d8a5eb5-0992-4883-a68e-006e3d839c32%22%2c%22oid%22%3a%22e227f40a-1b5e-4d4d-b419-72fa2f94c872%22%7d

ANNEXURE-

Link for PPTs presented during National Consultation on Health and well-being of children in covid 19 pandemic.

https://ncpcrin-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/it_ncpcrin_onmicrosoft_com/Eis0ooHxZkZMpv_ycKxAO_bMBjmxXCKM83F9ucWc-IvnuXQ?e=nOZff5
