

2021 WORLD CONGRESS ON JUSTICE WITH CHILDREN

15-20 November 2021

“Ensuring access to justice for all children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”

Workshop Programme

Application of Vulnerability, Mental Health, and Rights Frameworks in Psycholegal Assessments of Children in Conflict with the Law

Date	Thursday, 18th November 2021		
Timing	11:00 - 12:30 Geneva	15:30 - 17:00 New Delhi	19:00 - 20:30 Tokyo
Organiser	SAMVAD		
Type of Workshop	Certified Training		
Region	Asia		
Language	English		

Abstract

This training workshop will present the “Psychosocial and Mental Health Assessment Proforma” and the “Preliminary Assessment Proforma” that were developed as a comprehensive assessment methodology for children in conflict with the law, by a community of child and adolescent mental health service providers in India. Their approach views adolescent offending from a vulnerability lens and provides for a methodology that adopts an evidence-based approach to rehabilitative interventions, incorporating neurodevelopmental and mental health issues in adolescence as well as psychosocial factors of risk and vulnerability. The workshop will contrast these models with other psychological instruments (i.e., RST-I and SAVRY) that are a subject of controversy, by exploring the contours of these assessment methodologies and the related dilemmas and challenges in debates on evaluating children’s psycholegal capacities. Through this, the workshop will provide alternative approaches to inform decision-making, especially in cases where the child in conflict with the law is being considered for transfer to the adult courts.

Key take-aways of the session

- Locating the development of juvenile (jurisdictional) transfer systems, including epistemological approaches to psycholegal evaluations of children’s capacities, within its larger historical context.
- Understanding key controversies in current approaches to psycholegal capacity-evaluations of the justice-system involved youth.

2021 WORLD CONGRESS ON JUSTICE WITH CHILDREN

15-20 November 2021

“Ensuring access to justice for all children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”

- Developing a practical understanding of the assessment methodologies developed by a community of child and adolescent mental health service providers in India, i.e., the “Psychosocial and Mental Health Assessment Proforma” and the “Preliminary Assessment Proforma”.

Expected outcomes

Participants are oriented on alternatives to transfer decision-making where adolescents tend to be placed in the criminal justice system, i.e., alternatives that encourage moving away from retributive towards rehabilitative and restorative approaches.

Suggested prerequisite knowledge of training participants

- A. Minimum of 1 year of professional experience in relevant disciplinary domains associated with children’s involvement in the country’s child justice system. This includes, but is not limited to, the following cadre of professionals: i) child care professionals (including social workers, psychiatric social workers, mental health professionals), ii) probation officers & other relevant government & non-governmental functionaries working with children in the justice system, iii) legal and judicial personnel; and/or
- B. Engagement with policy/academic research in the relevant disciplinary domains associated with children's involvement in the country’s child justice system, including law, child/adolescent development, and mental health & neuroscience.

Speakers

- **Moderator: Dr. Shekhar Seshadri**
Senior Professor, Dept. of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, NIMHANS & Principal Investigator, SAMVAD
Dr. Shekhar Seshadri is a child psychiatrist with 40 years of experience in the field of child mental health, but his work also extends to enabling access to mental health for vulnerable child populations. His areas of interest in child mental health are childhood trauma, gender and sexuality, and life skill education. Believing that wider psychosocial interventions are rooted in child rights, he has undertaken various legal and policy-related initiatives, in addition to the training and capacity building of child care service providers. He has actively participated in deliberations during the drafting of significant child-related laws, including the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.

2021 WORLD CONGRESS ON JUSTICE WITH CHILDREN

15-20 November 2021

“Ensuring access to justice for all children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”

- **Panelists**

1. **Saurabh Shashi Ashok**

Project Officer (Policy and Law), SAMVAD

With a background in social sciences and law, Saurabh Shashi Ashok has previously assisted a Special Public Prosecutor on cases relating to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012. His areas of policy and research work include children in conflict with the law & child justice, juvenile transfer, child sexual abuse (specifically child forensic interviewing, child witness testimony, and appreciation of evidence under POCSO), child custody issues in matrimonial disputes, and integration of child protection and mental health services in rural local governance.

2. **Sheila Ramaswamy**

Technical & Operational Lead, SAMVAD

With a background in medical and psychiatric social work and public health, Sheila Ramaswamy has worked in emergency and disaster contexts, in both natural disaster and war-torn countries across Asia, Africa, and the Middle-East. Her engagement ranges from designing and initiating community child protection and mental health interventions to policy and advocacy engagements on child-related laws. She enjoys direct work with children, across many contexts including trauma, child sexual abuse, adoption, and justice-system involved youth. She also develops and implements training programs, through the use of participatory and creative pedagogies, for child care service providers and Judicial Officers.

- **Chat moderator: Arya Raje, Project Officer (Policy and Law), SAMVAD**