

A social awareness campaign,
against child sexual abuse through forum theatre



Say No to Child Abuse

Increasing Social Awareness
against Child Abuse and
Strengthening Child
Protection Mechanism through
Forum Theatre

Background and Rationale

Child Sexual Abuse is a common problem that occurs across the world regardless of gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic circumstances. There is a significant increase in the number of cases of violence against children in Sri Lanka. Children have become one of the most vulnerable groups due to many reasons, such as age, physical, intellectual and social development, emotional/behavioural functioning, role in the family, etc. Statistics tabled in the Parliament of Sri Lanka on 09 April 2013 reveals that 1,759 child rape incidents, 330 rapes, 5475 cases of child molestation, 29 cases of sexual harassment against women and 1,194 child abuse cases incurred in 2012. Of these, the highest number of child rapes 173 in total were reported from Anuradhapura, while 166 cases reported from Kurunegala, 129 cases from Colombo, 111 cases

from Gampaha and Ratnapura, 106 from Galle and 93 from Hambanthota.

According to the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs there has been an increase in the cases of child rape in last seven years. 799 cases of child rape reported in 2006, 805 cases in 2007, 914 cases in 2008, 922 cases in 2009, 1,089 cases in 2010, 1,169 cases in 2011 with 1759 cases in 2012.

More shockingly 90% of these incidents are happening with the consent/not forced situation of the victim. Parents going aboard, not enough security for children at their homes, drug addiction, alcoholism and poverty are the major causes say the police department. However there are many other factors, such as technology advancement in communication, Internet, mobile phones and mass media that play a major role in this tragic situation.



It has been understood that many school children are either forced or coerced into sexual activities/abuse by the people known to them. It has also come to light that the particular issues have led the victim to some other problems such as low self-esteem, drug abuse, prostitution etc. It is believed that these problems are often under-reported due to social stigma, psychological complexities, fear or ignorance of the child, with other possible repercussions to the child or to the family.

Act4: Theatre for Change understands the necessity for greater efforts for raising awareness for prevention of, and action against child abuse and thus takes a step further to create a safer environment for children. Act4 with the support of couple of organisations and partnership with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Sri Lanka and the Police Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Women launched a programme called “Say No to Child Abuse” at school level, aiming to educate and empower the society at large on all forms of violence against children via medium of Forum Theatre; using the theatre beyond the purpose of entertaining.

Legal prohibitions alone are not the answer to the growing nature of violence against children. Act4:Theatre for Change understands the necessity for greater efforts for raising awareness for prevention of, and action against child abuse and thus takes a step further to create a safer environment for children. Act4 believes that prevention is better than remedy thus commits on prevention of child abuse through increasing awareness and knowledge among the victims themselves. Act4:Theatre for Change with the support of couple of organisations and partnership with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services, Sri Lanka and the Police Bureau for the Prevention of Abuse of Children and Women launched a programme called “Say No to Child Abuse” at school level, aiming to educate and empower the society at large on all forms of violence against children via medium of Forum Theatre; using the theatre beyond the purpose of entertaining.

Act4:Theatre for Change, a well trained groups specialized for Forum Theatre, has a widely spread network across the country. As a successful ongoing mission it has conducted 25 programmes rewardingly with the support of British Council Sri Lanka in requested schools in the Colombo and Monaragala, Kandy and Mathara districts. The impact of the project on the society is very positive and many other schools and authorities are requesting such workshops to be held in their localities. Act4: Theatre for Change plans to conduct 500 Forum Theatre performances to increase awareness on child sexual abuse and related issues in both Tamil and Sinhala medium identified schools targeting nearly 150000 students from grade 9 to Advanced Level.