ICDP Asian Regional Gathering – 2026

Normisjon Bangladesh

October 13-14, 2026

Hotel Lakeshore, Gulsan-2, Dhaka

Healthy Childhood Development Program (HCDP)

Day-1

HCDP project of Normisjon Bangladesh organized a two-day Asian Regional Gathering from October 13-14, 2026, at Hotel Lakeshore, Gulsan-2, Dhaka. ICDP facilitators, trainers, partner organizations and guests from Nepal, Thailand and Norway participated in the program. The program began with the playing of the National Anthem of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, with all participants standing respectfully. The invited guests were then warmly welcomed with traditional sashes as a gesture of honor and appreciation.

Rana D. Mazumder, Director of Normisjon Bangladesh, warmly welcomed all participants and expressed his gratitude for their presence. He emphasized respecting cultural and linguistic diversity and shared a story highlighting ICDP's positive impact on parenting practices, particularly the shift from physical punishment to empathetic caregiving. He reaffirmed Normisjon Bangladesh's vision of ensuring every child enjoys dignity, rights, and a safe, loving environment. He appreciated the dedication of ICDP facilitators and international guests, encouraging participants to exchange experiences, strengthen partnerships, and learn from one another to promote positive caregiving practices and improve children's well-being across families and communities.

Mirjam Artmark Aanensen, Country Manager of the International Department at Normisjon Norway, expressed her gratitude for participating in the ICDP Asian Regional Gathering. She emphasized that every child, regardless of cultural, ethnic, or social background, deserves dignity, respect, equal rights, and a safe, nurturing environment. She highlighted ICDP's role in promoting positive caregiving, child well-being, and inclusive development, including support for children with disabilities. Appreciating the commitment of ICDP representatives in Bangladesh. She encouraged participants to celebrate achievements, share experiences, strengthen partnerships, and collaborate across cultures to build a better future for every child.

Dr. Gerd Eli Lindtjørn Haaland, Medical Doctor at Haukeland University Hospital, International ICDP Trainer of Trainers, and Consultant of ICDP Bangladesh, expressed her joy and gratitude for serving as the keynote speaker at the ICDP Asian Regional Gathering. Reflecting on her professional experience in Bangladesh, she recalled witnessing children experiencing physical punishment and lacking the dignity and care

they deserved. These experiences motivated her to explore ways to protect children's rights and strengthen parent-child relationships. Through collaboration with international colleagues and training in India and Nepal, she gained the knowledge and resources needed to introduce ICDP in Bangladesh. Dr. Haaland emphasized that ICDP is a research-based program focusing on positive communication, empathy, eye contact, and responsive caregiving to promote children's healthy development and well-being. She highlighted the positive changes reported by families and communities through improved caregiving practices. Recognizing the participation of representatives from 20 partner organizations, she stressed that ICDP is a shared initiative requiring collective ownership, commitment, and collaboration. She encouraged all partners and facilitators to strengthen their cooperation and expand the program's reach across Bangladesh. Concluding her address, Dr. Haaland thanked the participants and encouraged them to continue working together to ensure every child grows up in an environment filled with love, dignity, respect, and care.

A video message from Nicoletta Armstrong, Chairperson of ICDP International, was shared during the gathering. She expressed heartfelt appreciation for the ICDP team in Bangladesh for their dedication to promoting positive caregiving practices and improving children's well-being. She emphasized the importance of partnerships and collaboration in ensuring sustainability and wider impact of ICDP initiatives. Although she regretted being unable to attend the gathering in person, she conveyed her strong personal connection and continued support for the team. She thanked all participants for their commitment and encouraged them to continue working together to strengthen families, nurture children, and advance the vision of ICDP.

Mr. Alexander Falck-Bilden, Deputy Head of Mission at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangladesh, extended his best wishes to all participants of the ICDP Asian Regional Gathering. He expressed appreciation for the partnership between Normisjon Bangladesh and Normisjon and recognized their contributions to positive change in Bangladesh, particularly in health, education, and rights-based development. He emphasized that every child deserves dignity, safety, good health, and opportunities to reach their full potential. Highlighting Child Rights Week and National Girl Child Day, he stressed that protecting children's rights requires not only laws and policies but also responsible attitudes and positive practices within families and communities. He recognized ICDP as an important initiative in promoting positive caregiving and strengthening children's well-being. He also reaffirmed Norway's commitment to partnerships that support children's rights and development. Concluding his remarks, he encouraged participants to continue working collaboratively to ensure every child grows up in a safe, caring, and supportive environment.

Sunila Maharjan, representing ECEC Innovation in Education, shared Nepal's experiences and achievements in implementing the International Child Development Program (ICDP). She explained that ICDP began in Nepal in 2014 with 14 trained facilitators and expanded significantly, reaching approximately 1,000 facilitators. Since 2017, developing trainers has further strengthened the program's implementation and sustainability. She highlighted key success factors, including partnerships with schools, churches, faith-based organizations, and government bodies; facilitator capacity building; contextualization of materials into local languages and cultures; stakeholder networking; and recognition of facilitators' contributions. Sunila also identified challenges, particularly limited engagement of local government authorities and difficulties maintaining consistent facilitator participation. She highlighted the introduction of a module supporting parents and children with disabilities, reflecting ICDP's commitment to inclusive caregiving. She further noted the program's expansion into Mongolia, Bhutan, and Pakistan. Concluding her presentation, she thanked participants and encouraged continued collaboration to promote positive caregiving and children's well-being.

Olav Skjerpe, Advisor and Executive Board Member of ICDP Thailand, shared Thailand's experiences and progress in implementing ICDP, emphasizing its core message: "Understand your child and act accordingly." He explained that ICDP began in Thailand in 2022 with support from Nepali trainers, engaging diverse linguistic and cultural communities. The program was introduced in kindergartens and schools, helping parents, caregivers, and educators develop positive caregiving practices. Olav highlighted strategies for maintaining facilitator engagement, including online communication groups for sharing updates and monitoring activities. Thailand now has eight trainers, and ICDP continues to expand into new areas. Training materials are also being translated and adapted to local languages and cultural contexts. He emphasized ICDP Thailand's commitment to national ownership, organizational capacity, and sustainability. Its vision is to build a society where adults understand children and every child can develop well. He encouraged continued collaboration and knowledge-sharing across countries to strengthen positive caregiving and children's well-being.

Angela Lovely Mondol shared the journey and achievements of the International Child Development Program (ICDP) in Bangladesh, highlighting its role in transforming caregiving practices and strengthening parent-child relationships. Reflecting on a troubling incident of child mistreatment at Basha, she explained how the need to protect

children's dignity and safety inspired efforts to introduce ICDP through Normisjon Bangladesh. She emphasized that every child has rights, feelings, needs, and dignity and deserves to feel, "I am loved, I am valued, and I am safe." Under the theme "Empathy in Action," ICDP Bangladesh promotes positive parenting through empathy, affection, respectful communication, and nonviolent caregiving. Angela highlighted the importance of partnerships in expanding the program and strengthening local ownership. She reported achievements including 335 certified facilitators, 17 trainers, eight assistant trainers, and one Trainer of Trainers. Concluding, she reaffirmed ICDP's vision of ensuring every child grows up in a safe, peaceful, and loving environment.

A recognition ceremony was held to acknowledge the dedication and contributions of ICDP trainers and facilitators in promoting positive caregiving practices and strengthening child well-being. Tasmia Lubaba was awarded a certificate recognizing her achievement as an ICDP Trainer. In addition, 13 facilitators who had successfully facilitated three or more caregiver groups were recognized for their valuable contributions. Each received an appreciation letter and a crest in recognition of their commitment, hard work, and efforts to promote positive caregiving practices within families and communities. This recognition celebrated the facilitators' dedication to the ICDP mission and encouraged them to continue their important work in ensuring that children grow up in loving, safe, and supportive environments.

Learning Session

Angela Lovely Mondol facilitated a session on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Protection from Sexual Misconduct (PSM) in relation to ICDP. The session focused on understanding gender stereotypes, gender roles, and power structures that can contribute to violence and discrimination. She also discussed sexual misconduct, its different forms, and the role of power, trust, and unequal relationships in creating situations where abuse may occur. Using the Butterfly Woman metaphor, she explored how shame, blame, and guilt affect survivors and emphasized the importance of a human rights-based approach. The session encouraged participants to promote safe and respectful relationships, challenge harmful practices, prevent violence and sexual misconduct, and protect the dignity and rights of every child and caregiver.

Dr. Lipy Gloria Rozario conducted a session on the importance of parental self-care in building healthy families and nurturing positive relationships between children and caregivers. She emphasized that children learn by observing and imitating their parents and caregivers, making positive role modelling essential for their emotional and social development. She discussed seven dimensions of parental self-care, common barriers that prevent parents from caring for themselves, and the characteristics of a healthy

family. She also encouraged participants to adopt practical self-care strategies in their daily lives to strengthen their own well-being and improve their relationships with children. The session highlighted that caring for oneself is an important step toward caring effectively for children and creating a loving, supportive, and healthy family environment.

Dr. Nafiza Ferdowshi delivered a presentation on the journey, vision, and future perspectives of the International Child Development Program (ICDP) in Bangladesh. She discussed the origins and development of ICDP, its vision and mission, and its role in promoting positive interactions between children and their caregivers. She also shared insights from her research on ICDP, highlighting the study's objectives, research design, and methodology. Her presentation explored the importance and impact of ICDP in strengthening caregiver-child relationships and promoting children's well-being. She emphasized the potential of research-based evidence to guide the program's further development and expansion in Bangladesh.

Sajeda Akter Boby presented an overview of the ICDP Bangladesh Advisory Committee (BAC), highlighting the status of ICDP in Bangladesh, the country's population context, and the growing need for positive caregiving practices. She explained the structure, roles, and activities of ICDP-BAC in supporting the implementation and coordination of ICDP initiatives. She emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships, expanding ICDP to reach more families and communities, and building local capacity to ensure the program's sustainability. She also encouraged continued collaboration among stakeholders to promote positive caregiver-child relationships and improve children's well-being throughout Bangladesh.

Day-2

Angela Lovely Mondol facilitated a participatory discussion on the challenges and opportunities of implementing ICDP across Asian countries. She highlighted the importance of safe childhoods, parental self-care, positive role modelling, and empathetic caregiving without punishment. Participants identified key challenges, including traditional mindsets, cultural and religious barriers, limited awareness of child rights, gender stereotypes, misconceptions about ICDP, financial constraints, language barriers, inactive facilitators, caregiver dropouts, limited organizational support, and insufficient government engagement. Supporting children with disabilities and reaching vulnerable families were also recognized as important concerns. Key opportunities included partnerships with schools, churches, community networks, NGOs, and government departments; local

fundraising; integrating ICDP into existing programs; and engaging fathers and male caregivers. Participants recommended adapting materials to local languages and cultures, strengthening facilitator training and follow-up, sharing success stories, and developing strategic plans. The discussion emphasized collaboration, local ownership, capacity building, and sustainable partnerships to expand ICDP and promote safe, loving, and supportive environments for children across Asia.

The session explored leadership, sustainability, cultural adaptation, and regional expansion of ICDP. Ms. Boby emphasized that leadership extends beyond senior management, as trainers and facilitators also drive positive caregiving practices within communities. Speakers reviewed ICDP's journey in Bangladesh from its introduction through Basha in 2018 to expansion through Normisjon Bangladesh in 2021, supported by Digni. They highlighted leadership commitment, continuous training, supervision, monitoring, quality control, and strong networks as essential sustainability measures, with self-sustainability targeted by 2030. Group discussions identified challenges including limited funding, inactive facilitators, weak organizational commitment, traditional beliefs, gender inequality, and physical punishment. Participants recommended integrating ICDP into existing projects, ensuring adequate budgets, motivating facilitators, adapting materials to local languages and cultures, and promoting nonviolent parenting. To expand regional impact, participants emphasized training community leaders, teachers, and faith leaders, strengthening cross-country networks, and extending ICDP to more districts. The session reinforced collective ownership, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration as foundations for sustainable child well-being. The session focused on the future direction of ICDP in Asia and the development of a plan of action for the next ten years.

Dr. Karen Rebbestad Løkken and Rumi Zengcham highlighted new developments, shared the ICDP Bangladesh website, and invited three individuals to share their personal testimonies, demonstrating the program's impact on caregiving practices and children's well-being. The discussion emphasized the importance of government ownership and support in ensuring the sustainability of ICDP initiatives. Participants also explored opportunities for the program's growth, expanding its reach to more families and communities, and establishing new partnerships across Asia. The session encouraged continued collaboration, shared learning, and strategic planning to strengthen ICDP's long-term impact and ensure that more children grow up in safe, loving, and supportive environments.

The closing remarks emphasized the importance of believing in God and having faith that He will guide and support everyone in implementing ICDP successfully. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the key learnings, experiences, and good practices shared during the gathering and translate them into practical actions within their organizations, communities, and countries. They were also encouraged to remain active and committed

facilitators rather than becoming inactive, and to strengthen collaboration, networking, and mutual learning among ICDP practitioners across Asia. Sincere appreciation was expressed to the organizing team, partner organizations, and all contributors for making the gathering meaningful and successful. The session concluded with an inspiring call for everyone to continue working together with faith, dedication, and empathy to build more caring, responsive, and supportive families and communities where every child can grow up with love, dignity, and respect.

Documented by: James Biswas
Program Manager, Normisjon Bangladesh