



## **2ND CHILDREN'S WORLD CONGRESS ON CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION** New Delhi, India, 4-8 September 2005



### **We are the Present, Our Voice Is the Future**

We, the delegates of the Second Children's World Congress on Child Labour and Education, have come to the city of New Delhi, India, from all different parts of the world, speaking different languages, growing up with different cultures and backgrounds, because we all know that child labour must be eliminated. This Congress was organised to rectify the injustice during the last Congress in Italy when children from Asia and Africa were denied visas to attend. These children felt much discriminated against and their voices and opinions were greatly missed during the discussions in Italy. Now we have revised the Florence Declaration to include their ideas.

Each country had a different selection process to choose the delegates. All children who participated in the selection process had either faced child labour in their own experience or had learned about it and joined the fight against child labour. With the passion and desire to solve this terrible crime against 246 million children around the world, we were all qualified to take part in this Congress. This is why the discussions for the last 3 days have been very fruitful.

Before we even start to discuss about child labour, we must appreciate that the only way the children can have their rights is in the situation of peace. Peace is the most basic human right. We have to ask ourselves why everyone is not able to have something so fundamental. While living in peace, every child has not only a better chance of getting their rights, but also has a stronger potential to improve the world for their generations and those to come. This sentiment was echoed by the Delhi Congress, saying that terrorism and conflict is one of the greatest hindrances to a child's success. Firstly, many children are involved in the production and execution of ammunitions for war. Media and entertainment are promoting hateful ideas and propaganda, which perpetuated war, crime, and violence. Conflict is also often propagated by the corrupt political heads for their personal benefit and interest. In that way, a cycle of hate and distrust between religions and ethnic group's crops up, when in reality the conflict could be truly only between businessmen and leaders. Also, this gives way to warranted distrust of the government. When the government is seen as ineffective or corrupt, people become aggravated and desperate so they turn to terrorist groups. The government of the world have to see education, unemployment, poverty, terrorism and child labour as connected entities. While children have no choice in nations waging wars, they are almost always the most affected.

While the governments put an enormous amount of money to weapons and war, there are still children who cannot read or write. They have no homes to live in or food to eat. The government must take the needs of children as a priority. They must provide all that is necessary to live while still protecting our rights.

When we started discussing about child labour, we found that many issues were common to all different parts of the world. We heard personal stories from the children about; child trafficking, sexual exploitation, working on fishing boat, cleaning car, selling things on street or in market, pornography, collecting garbage, transportation and shipping, brick making and demolishing, the making of medical utensils and other dangerous materials, drug trafficking, domestic servants, bounded labourers, farming, mining, weaving carpets, child soldiers, working in factories and sweatshops. Majority of the children are engaged in agriculture which is extremely dangerous. These children are misused everyday and have no one to speak for them.

While most people and governments are aware these problems exist, they are hidden or just ignored. This does not change the fact they all are very dangerous to the physical and mental well being of a child. These forms of child labour must be stopped. Most of the children have expressed that they are losing faith in the governments because of their empty promises. They have made many promises to end child



## 2ND CHILDREN'S WORLD CONGRESS ON CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION New Delhi, India, 4-8 September 2005



labour through education and better social services. But they do not act. Their promises are not met with real commitment or resources.

Trafficking of children is a major problem faced by the world today. Children are sold, forced into prostitution and sexually abused, their kidneys are taken out and sold, and even eyes are sold by unscrupulous traffickers. Governments must fight against this. They must enforce the laws they already have. But today's laws may not be enough so they must make more effective ones. The governments in countries where trafficking happens must work together to have laws which can criminalise the traffickers. They need to make strict laws regarding trafficking and implement them. The security forces of bordering countries must work together because all instances of inter-country trafficking happened because of neglectful or corrupt officials who see the problem and profit from it or do nothing.

Another practice that causes child labour is child marriage. When children marry young, they often have to discontinue their education. They have children younger and most of times have many more. This can cause over population and poverty, two factors related to child labour.

As it is a responsibility of governments to protect our rights, end child labour, and provide free, equal education and good quality, we have many demands for the governments. Governments must provide compulsory quality education free of cost. Education must also be provided equally to all children regardless of gender, race, economic status, religion, places of birth, citizenships, caste, disability, indigenouness or languages. Every country has to make sure the issue of child labour is taught in every school.

The position of teacher is a respected authority in a society so when a teacher is chosen he or she should be knowledgeable, properly educated, child friendly, and should refrain from using physical or mental abuse or humiliation as means of discipline. There should be a mechanism to check that the teachers are doing their job well and these laws to provide education. In order to do this, teachers must be provided with a good standard of living, meaning higher wages, housing which is close to the school and or transportation. They have to teach without discrimination or bias.

School facilities must be improved. Unsafe buildings, unsanitary conditions, lack of separate toilets for girls and boys, clean water, electricity, lighting, fans or heaters, equipment, libraries, laboratories, lack of health care facilities; all these are barriers to good quality education., It has been proven that when students in developing nations are given food at school, attendance increases and performance improves. Many girls are left out of schools because they have to care for their younger brothers and sisters therefore we propose that government crèches are mandated. There should be a student union where student's concerns and ideas are addressed. This union should be able to create a set of guidelines that teachers and administrators must follow. The gap between rich and poor is evident in school. Public schools are not now providing the same standards as private institutions. This gap must be filled.

After disasters, educations must be continued. Poverty of a country, hardship of a country will only increase if we do not provide for education.

When we speak about the governments, we talk not only about the role of national governments but also other governmental bodies at international and regional levels that are responsible for protecting our rights. First and most importantly, governments must listen to children. The governments must make the issues of the children a priority and include children in the decision-making that affects their lives. Governments must also provide opportunities for children to participate and express their opinions.



## **2ND CHILDREN'S WORLD CONGRESS ON CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION**

**New Delhi, India, 4-8 September 2005**



Governments must criminalise child labour but should never criminalise the children. They must create and carry out laws that strictly punish the adults who have abused children for their own interest. Governments must support the children if they want to bring cases of them being used as child labourers to court, by providing a free attorney. Children should be able to turn in the people who have abused them without fear of getting trouble. These children must be rescued and rehabilitated.

Governments should encourage adults to work. Adult workers always have to be allowed to unionise in their workplace, because the union can help protect them from dangerous working conditions and provide them the minimum wage. It is important that adults are protected as workers so that the children do not have to work.

Governments must establish a National Plan of Action to end child labour. These plans should be made together with children. Governments must make sure that overseas development aid (ODA) goes directly to its purpose and does not end up in the wrong hands.

Governments must make a system to put some trademarks for the products that are not made by child labourers.

Governments, not only should they work with other governments, they should also work with civil society and trade unions to be at most effective. In return, the civil society must understand the demands of the children and work together with them. NGOs also have to use the resources that they have honestly and directly for the children.

It is also parents' responsibility to listen to children. The children need love, respect and dignity. It is in the hands of parents to provide with happy and stable family life. Parents must talk about issues such as child sexual exploitation or abuse even when they are not comfortable because this is the only way a child will know his or her natural rights of safety and security. Parents must understand the importance of proper education no matter of the gender of the child.

Having identified the current situation of child labour and our demands from the adults, we now show our commitment and the role in ending child labour. We, the children, have to start initiatives to spread awareness about child labour in our own local communities and villages. We must educate each other about child labour, from a child to a child to promote child participation.

We must work at national level and establish a Children's Parliament, in every country, that is not just a symbol but a source of power for children to change the situations. This Parliament would elect a representative to the country's government. These representatives would also meet at a congress at regional and at international to look at the problems at a larger scale, and report back to their governments and local communities.

We have to start a network of children so that we can keep contact with each other to be educated on the issue all over the world. This network will be made up of children from all over the world, and it will spread the stories of child labour and opinions. The network will help us plan more effective actions in our struggle against child labour. The network will also be a medium to report on the governments' progress in eliminating child labour. Also, we believe for the vigilance of this movement, children, both activists and child labourers must meet on a regular basis.

We believe that the use of art, dance, music and drama as a form of expression and means to spread awareness about child labour is very important. These are ways in which children from any background can connect with, understand and enjoy.



**2ND CHILDREN'S  
WORLD CONGRESS  
ON CHILD LABOUR  
AND EDUCATION**  
New Delhi, India, 4-8 September 2005



We must also use media to spread our voices. We would create our own form of media, such as newspaper developed by the children for the children, for us to freely express our opinion. Media also must be more friendly and tell the truth about child labour and help us combat child labour. We have to bring the efforts to end child labour out to the villages, where the fight is not as strong. Information about child labour sometimes only reaches cities and people in the villages do not have information about the dangers of child labour. We must get them involved.

We promise to continue to take action to eliminate child labour and make a better world for children. Now, we ask all of you to join us, because only together can we truly achieve freedom for all. In this friendship, we will create a healthy and peaceful world for all.

**Today, the power is in our hands. We define the future.  
We are the present and our voice is the future!**