



# Kathmandu Declaration

From the  
South and Central Asia  
Convergence of  
Working Children

25-27 August, 2005

## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS



Child Brigade



1

Over 40% of the world's population are children. Amongst them an estimated 350 million are working children, with 60% of these children working in the Asia and Pacific Region and still a majority of them are living in South Asia. The situation of working children in South Asia is thus even worse. The conditions of working children are more or less common in all countries in South Asia and Central Asia.

We recognize that 2004 is a remarkable year for the working children's movement in South and Central Asia, as well as strengthening the international movement of working children. We are increasingly taking the lead through series of meetings and discussions at national and international levels to promote our participation in tackling the issue of Child Labour.



It is our pride that we, 40 children, representing national, regional, and local working children's organisations from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and Tajikistan are now represented in this meeting. Though our friends from the movements in Afghanistan and Mongolia could not join the meeting.

One of the most important outcomes of this meeting is that representatives of the working children's movement from Sri-Lanka and Tajikistan have joined our Asian Movement making us even stronger.

As a result of 3 days discussions and interactions, we have strengthened our Asian movement, with a special focus on South and Central Asia.

We have identified challenges that form our hurdles, and the opportunities that

can be used to move forward. We have also discussed ways to overcome our difficulties.

We believe we can face our challenges collectively with the strength of our past experiences and our united efforts. This has brought an enormous opportunity for us to share and learn how to confront the issues.

We, the representatives of working children's organisations, who have gathered in the Working Children's Regional Convergence in Kathmandu 25<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> August 2005 declare the following resolutions that is agreed upon by the undersigned children's representatives.

We think it is bad to eliminate child labor without appropriate alternatives. Governments have to ensure that appropriate alternatives are available and accessible before passing legislation

eliminating child labour completely. At the same time children involved in hazardous work like drug dealing, trafficking, pornography, prostitution, smuggling and children in armed conflict should be rescued and rehabilitated with proper alternative options as soon as possible. There should be defined laws and Governments should also determine the timeframe for work-which should be protected by law.

We believe that we need to come out of hazardous working situations by means of appropriate alternatives like respectful, paid work with minimum wage; and standard and equal opportunity of quality education without discrimination. However, we should not accept the most hazardous forms of work which is detrimental to our survival and development. We recognize that not only poverty but low quality education,



2





3

violence and humiliation at schools can also lead us to drop out of school and get involved in hazardous work.

We recognized that the South and Central Asian Children face common problems in our working and living conditions and that working children in this region have both good and bad experiences in our lives.

Amongst the good things that work brings for us is that we work to meet our livelihood and survival needs; and meet health support for self and family. Sometimes the work we do gives us the skills and training. By working we learn to cope with the challenges and hostility. Work also gives us self dignity, feelings of solidarity, pride in resolving some of our family problems, for example, repayment of loans taken by our parents.

At the same time we found many painful experiences which are part of our working lives and which are common to all working children in South and Central Asia. Our friends here shared some of those experiences. Many of us are involved in hazardous work, many of us are at risk of meeting serious accidents and amputations. We are compelled to be engaged in hazardous work because sometimes it brings more money to meet our extreme poverty and other times because no other options are available. Working children all over South and Central Asia are more exposed to be misled to drugs, gambling, exposed to sexual abuse and abuse by adult employers. Street children face typical street hazards like being at the risk of false accusation of theft. Employers never look at the cause why children have to work. On top of this, economic exploitation; discrimination including gender



discrimination; physical, sexual and mental torture and exploitation; and feelings of insecurity are common in South and Central Asia.

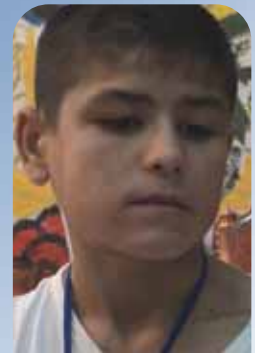
Although there are laws and acts on children and child labour existing in many countries in South and Central Asia, these are not always congenial towards children. We are never consulted while formulating laws and policies although we know best about the problems we face. In particular, children from the so called 'untouchable' caste and 'indigenous' groups who comprise the majority of the working children, face extreme discrimination.

The laws are also not accessible to the uneducated community and some members of the law enforcing agencies are not aware of the law.

However, in the given scenario we also have the history of the movement and getting organized by ourselves in South and Central Asia. Some of the movements in South and Central Asian countries have been integral to the process of developing the working children's own movement throughout the world. Movements like Bhima Sangha, Bal Mazdoor Union, National Movement of Working Children in India, National Forum of Working Children in Nepal, National Forum of working Children in Bangladesh, PRWSWO in Pakistan, and National Working Children's Forum in Sri-Lanka have been effectively influencing the formulation of laws and policies. They have influenced and contributed effectively towards generating like minded movements in other countries. Working children are increasingly getting organized in the regions.



4





5

We, revisiting the history of the International Movements, that we are a part of, have also learnt about the background and processes that began in Kundapur which has brought us here to Kathmandu. We pay our solidarity to that long journey. We also share the values and principles of Working Children's Movements in which working children themselves are taking the lead and are committed to continue to be a part of them.

We make our commitment to pass this message to our other friends in our countries when we are back and we will help other children to form their organisations and we will make our national movements even stronger.

## SIGNED BY

Children from National Working Children's Movements:

**National Working Children's Movement  
BANGLADESH**



**National Movement of Working Children  
INDIA**



**National Forum of Working Children  
NEPAL**



**National Committee on Working Children  
SRI LANKA**

Children Coming from Other Organizations:



**Bhima Sangha  
INDIA**



**Bal Mazdoor Union  
INDIA**



**Pakistan Rural Workers Social  
Welfare Organization, PAKISTAN**



**Refugee Children and Vulnerable Citizens  
TAJIKISTAN**

**Kathmandu, 28 August, 2005.**

Note: Not all children's movement have developed their organizational logo.



## Annexure

Recommendations from the participating children for future action

### At the national level:

- At country level we should involve the community in solving our problems.
- The government must listen and incorporate children's views while formulating laws and policy.
- In each and every police station there should be a separate cell to deal with children's issues and the police should be trained on Child Rights.
- Should promote awareness programme for Child Rights and against rights violation by organizing street drama, rally, etc. INGOs and NGOs and international Organizations should support us.
- To enforce the good aspects and remove the bad aspects of the laws.
- Promote skill development training.
- Promote awareness on Child Rights amongst children.

### At the Regional/international level:

- We need a very strong movement at the Asia level. Those organizations who are involved in the movement should fight discrimination against working

children as well against all other forms of discrimination. A strong movement and voice can protest collectively against any laws that, if brought against the interest of the working children, at the country level.

- We should also have a Secretariat in South Asia. There should be child representatives in each country. The representatives can meet at regular intervals. We also will develop a monitoring mechanism to determine that the child leaders are working properly. When we are stronger then we will not be discriminated against again, and will spread the movement to other countries.
- At the country level a minimum but uniform wage standard for both informal and formal sector should be decided at national level.
- We will lobby the SAARC Secretariat to take forward the issues and agendas of working children
- There should be the provision of agreement between the Working child, and the Employer which should follow a uniform standard format approved by the Ministry of labour - a copy of that legal document should be submitted to the Labour Department of the

Government for proper monitoring.

- We need more opportunities of such 'Convergences', where we can express our views freely and find solutions together

### At the International Level:

- We should connect ourselves with working children moments of other countries and solve our problems collectively. We are more likely to be stronger and effective, when we are concentrating our efforts collectively in a single voice/platform.
- We will also draw adult support in fighting our problems.
- The discussions taken at local level should be disseminated at the national level.
- There should be campaigns to rescue children in hazardous working conditions.
- We need a strong forum at South and Central Asia through which we can confront our problems.
- To form an international child court/ ombudsmen for working children.
- We have to be involved with the process of NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies to express our views freely on Child Labour issues and to reflect our situations and context in its true sense for programmes to be effective.

Published by:

**Save the Children Sweden**

Regional Programme for South & Central Asia

c/o Save the Children UK

Lalitpur, GPO Box: 5850, Kathmandu, Nepal

Office: 00977-1-5531928/9,

Fax: 00977-1-5527266

Email: [info@savethechildren.org.np](mailto:info@savethechildren.org.np)

URL: [www.rb.se](http://www.rb.se)

**Save the Children Norway-Nepal**

Jawalakhel, Lalitpur

GPO Box: 3394, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Tel: 00977-1-5538705, 5538204

Fax: 00977-1-5538459

e-mail: [post@savechildren-norway.org.np](mailto:post@savechildren-norway.org.np)

URL: [www.reddbarna.no](http://www.reddbarna.no)



**ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE CONVERGENCE:**

Save the Children Sweden, Save the Children Norway, NFWC-Nepal,  
CONCERN-Nepal, ITALIANATS, UPCA, GFONT, CWIN