



[www.opcr.org](http://www.opcr.org)

*Produced and compiled by the Organisation for the Protection of Children's Rights, Mumbai  
76 Sabarigiri, Anushaktinagar, Mumbai 400 094, India  
Tel: 25506046  
email: roshni@vsnl.net*

**Editorial Team:**

*Riccardo Di Done  
Pascal Fischer  
Francois Meunier  
Roshni Udyavar*

*Vol 1, No. 1  
Oct. - Nov. 2003*

**Inside . . .**

**2** Campaign Against Child Labor, India

**3** News

**4** Forthcoming conferences & observances

# Children Speak

*A Newsletter of the Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights*

## Message from the President



Riccardo Di Done

*"Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged of man."*

*- Rabindranath Tagore.*

**T**oday we live in a highly mechanized and technological world – a world where children are no longer the dreams of our future. Never in history have so many children been victim of violence and poverty as they are today. And that is true regardless of whether they live in advanced countries – suffering the effects of family and social breakdown, alienation, or aggression – or whether they are suffering different forms of poverty and violence in the hunger, disease, toxic factories and sex trade of the developing world.

*Children Speak expresses the voice of children everywhere; it relates miseries and triumphs through narratives and real life stories; it articulates the voices of the voiceless and puts forward the essence of human life in this technology-driven world. Its purpose is to bring a global transformation for a humane and healthy society where children can live with dignity and happiness.*

***This mission is possible only through your support and guidance. Please send us your articles/ stories/ news in no more than 700 words giving the details of your organization. We also invite you to send us your comments and views about the contents of the Newsletter.***



***They might not be our children.*** You might not

*even know their names, or where they live. Yet the obligation is there... you feel it before the thought can register...A tangible, intuitive, and inseparable part of human nature.*



*Is it just the future they represent?  
In their innocence?  
Their awkwardness?  
Their vulnerability?*

*Or do we see something of ourselves in their goofy smiles, their frustrations, their hopes and dreams?*

*Instinct whispers that when we help a child, we heal an entire world. Not just a piece of that world. More important than that . . .*

*They touch us deeply. Their smiles, their tears, their look of wonder and excitement - all equally powerful. Without trying, they challenge our capacity to love, to be human, and humane.*

*They remind us of our obligation to create a better world. They are more real than the illusions we fill our days with.*

*The world can be a vast, mysterious, even threatening place seen through a child's eyes. They depend on us to survive it.*

*We depend on them as well - not just to survive the world as such, but to survive it well, with a clean conscience, and hope for the future.*

\*\*\*

# Campaign Against

**T**he Indian civilization is plagued with contradictions. It is the world's spiritual center. It represents the crux of oriental civilization. It is built around the family and its traditional values. Yet, it also has assimilated multinational culture - of MacDonalds, Coke and the nuclear family - faster than the western civilization. This new culture accompanying globalization is the culture of inapathy and callousness. How else can one explain the presence of nearly 80 million

child laborers in this country, working an average of 12 hours daily?

India has one of the largest numbers of child laborers in the world, contributing, according to the National Convention and Public Hearing of Girl Child Laborers, an estimated 20% of the country's GNP.

Most child labor in India is not

voluntary. Children in India often work because of economic pressure on families, nearly 60 million of which live below the poverty line. In addition to the more conspicuous forms of child labor observed in small-scale industries such as fireworks, balloon, carpet and bidi making, construction, farm

**With 80 million children under 18 years working for an average 12 hours daily, India has the largest number of child laborers in the world.**

labor, transportation and mining, large number of children are employed in households. It has been noted that the number of children working in this category has steadily

increased by almost 100% in the case of boys and by 81% in the case of girls since 1961.

Girls are most vulnerable as they are also victims of years of conditioning against the female gender in a male dominated society. A study conducted by Peace Trust found that among the 11,280 child domestic workers (below age 14 years) 94% were girls. Among the

Shanta assisted by her brother, prepares the soul of shoes, work that her family has undertaken for a local factory in Dharavi, Mumbai

# Child Labor: India

employers of these child domestic workers, 26.4% were government employees, 48.5% were factory owners and business people, and 18.2% were professionals.

The United Nations Convention on the "Rights of the Child, ratified by 191 countries, accords children the right to protection from exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to harm the child's physical, mental, spiritual health as well as moral or social development." Articles 33 – 39 further accord protection to children from sexual exploitation abuse and torture, child trafficking and use in the illicit production and trafficking of drugs.

Considering its huge population and the wide economic and social disparities, India held that: "While fully subscribing to the objectives and purposes of the Convention, and recognizing that the child has to be protected from all forms of exploitation including economic exploitation; noting that for several reasons children of different ages do work in India; having proscribed minimum ages for employment in hazardous occupations and in certain other areas; having made regulatory provisions regarding hours and conditions of employment; and being aware that it is not practical immediately to prescribe minimum ages for admission to each and every area of employment the provisions of Article 32 will be implemented by the Indian government."

Campaign Against Child Labor (CACL) is a national network of active women's groups, trade unions, academic institutions, media agencies, child and human rights organizations, research bodies, corporate houses, student volunteers and eminent citizens. Launched in 1992, it consists of nearly 6000 anti-child labor

groups spread across 17 states in India with many more in the process of joining. The objectives of CACL are to create awareness on child labor, highlight violations inflicted on child laborers, promote justice through fact finding and litigation, review policies and legislations on child labor, sensitize and educate civil society and law enforcement personnel on the evil of child labor and the urgent need to eradicate it, and ensure the fundamental right to education to all children up to 18 years.

The CACL's efforts address development issues of the communities from where children come into employment. It believes that initiatives for child labor eradication must be combined with community development and social mobilization, as well as the improvement of health, education, loan and credit facilities and ensuring minimum wages for adult employment. The CACL's strategy for eradication of child labor includes:

- ✿ The enforcement of the Articles 21,23,24,45,39 (e)and 39 (f) of the Indian Constitution which prohibit child labor.
- ✿ Poverty eradication by providing equal economic and social opportunities.
- ✿ Free, quality, relevant, compulsory education
- ✿ Legal reforms and enforcement of legislation, for example, the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, of 1986 and the Factories Act of 1938, to include all forms of employment for children below 16 years of age.
- ✿ Policy changes such as supporting community development, supporting free and compulsory education for all children, advocacy and awareness building as well as providing legal protection to street children. □

## NEWS...

### Canada expands access to AIDS drugs

Canada is in the process of enacting a legislation allowing Canadian generic medicine companies to export cheaper versions of patented medicines to poor countries in Africa and South Asia. If the law comes into force, Canada would become the first G7 nation to implement the World Trade Organization's agreement to allow for the export of cheaper medicines to countries critically in need of it.

Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director called Canada's move a "smart response". "Knowing that a country like Canada supports the use of WTO agreements in ways that enhance public health gives a great sense of confidence to poor countries in enabling a rapidly accelerated access to affordable life-saving medicines."

HIV/AIDS is disproportionately impacting children and young people, particularly girls, Bellamy said. More than half the 14,000 daily new HIV infections occur among people below the age of 25. In sub-Saharan Africa, the region hardest hit, one out of ten children in 15 countries have been orphaned by AIDS, and many more are living in households undergoing the severe emotional, social and financial stress of AIDS-related illness, she said.(UNICEF) □

### National Commission for Children

In accordance with the United Nations committee on Children, centered in Geneva, the Indian government is proposing the introduction of a National Commission for Children. The Bill tabled in 2001, is being considered in the ongoing monsoon session of the Indian Parliament.

The Commission will hopefully monitor the implementation of laws to protect children's rights, recommend revision in the existing laws and have the authority to "enquire suo motu or on a petition into any case pertaining to child rights' violation and negligence by a public servant who failed to prevent such a violation.(TOI) □

## International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence (2001-2010)

The International Decade for Peace grew from the International Year for the Culture of Peace initiated by the United Nations (UN Resolution A/RES/52/15) in 2000 to reinforce the efforts of people everywhere to collectively build a Culture of Peace. As a lead agency for this initiative, the UNESCO has developed an interactive website [www.unesco.org/cp](http://www.unesco.org/cp) allowing participants to promote their initiatives and to exchange information and resources between each other. More than 75 million individuals and thousands of local, national and international organizations representing more than 160 countries are already part of it. □

## Ninth Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect Sydney, Australia

The Ninth Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect will be hosted by the NSW Department of Community Services. This special event brings together people from across Australia who work to strengthen communities and families to protect children and young people. The theme for 2003, Many Voices, Many Choices, recognises that child abuse and neglect is of concern to a wide range of people across society, and there are many ways to address these issues. Closing date for submission of abstracts is 28 March 2003. Further information: Jeanette Morgan, Conference Manager, [jeanette.morgan@community.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jeanette.morgan@community.nsw.gov.au). Web: <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/accan> □

### OBSERVANCES & CONFERENCES

## The UNICEF Mine Action Strategy, 2002-2005

In order to reduce the risk of death due to landmines in war-ravaged countries, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has initiated the Mine Action Strategy which addresses the landmine and unexploded ordnance problem around the world. The objective of Mine Action, as stated by the UNICEF, is to identify and reduce the impact and risk of landmines and UXOs to a level where people can live safely; in which economic, social and health development can occur free from the constraints imposed

**Nearly 110 million  
antipersonal landmines  
exist in about 68 countries  
that maim or kill mostly  
civilians at the rate of  
nearly 26,000 each year.  
Landmine manufacture  
cost US\$ 5 while its  
removal costs US\$ 1000**

by landmine contamination, and in which the needs of victims can be addressed. This is achieved through:

- mine risk education;
- humanitarian demining, ie. mine and UXO survey, mapping, marking and (if necessary) clearance;
- victim assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration;
- stockpile destruction; and
- advocacy against the use of anti-personnel mines. □



### DONATION FORM

YES! I wish to contribute to the mission and activities of the OPCR on behalf of children.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount:  20 US\$  50 US\$  100 US\$  150 US\$ Other: \_\_\_\_\_ US\$

#### METHOD OF PAYMENT

Cash  Money Order  Cheque

Credit Card  MasterCard  Visa

Please make your cheque payable to: O.P.C.R.

American Express

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For the Love of our Children!

Organization for the Protection of Children's Rights (OPCR)

5167 Jean-Talon East, Suite 370, St-Leonard (Quebec), Canada H1S 1K8

Phone: (514) 593-4303 Fax: (514) 593-4659 Website: [www.opcr.org](http://www.opcr.org) Email: [info@osde.ca](mailto:info@osde.ca)

Registered Charity Number: 11906 9821 RR 0001

\*\*Please fax (if using a credit card) or mail this form with your donation.

**Thank you for your support!**