

National Consultation on Child Labour
29th & 30th April, 2017
National Bal Bhavan, New Delhi

Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), network of NGOs, Social Workers and individuals working on child rights has been hosting the Time to Talk, an international Campaign in India from 2015. Consultations and children advisory committee meetings have been organized as a part of the Time to Talk campaign to make children's voices heard in the Global Conference on Child Labour to be held in Argentina in November, 2017 and to get the perspectives of child workers on their work & life situation.

As a part of the Time to Talk campaign, a two day National Consultation on Child Labour was organised with 65 children from 14 Indian states in Delhi on 29th and 30th April, 2017. During the consultation, children were informed about the amendments made in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016. Dr. Helen R. Shekhar, Senior Researcher, VV Giri National Labour Institute, shared the status of child labour in India through an interactive session. Quoting the Census data, she mentioned that there were more child labourers in urban areas given the migration pattern in the country. She attributed the less number of working girls in the census to their "invisibility" as many girls tend to work within homes or invisible spaces. She motivated children to monitor the child labour situation in their neighbourhood and effectively utilize the Government helpline number of CHILDLINE 1098 when they come across any child rights violation.

The child participants of the consultation who were earlier employed or still working in different sectors, shared their experiences and demanded complete ban on child labour and wanted quality education to ensure a better childhood for others in similar situations. Appreciating the laws and polices children informed that the ground reality was different. Through group discussion and creative expressions children have formulated the following recommendations that were presented to the panel of representatives from the Government, International Labour Organization, Media and other responsible authorities.

The following recommendations were given by children after a thorough review and discussion on the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016:

1. A uniform definition of age of the child as "0-18 years" should be given in all the policies, legislation and Government documents in the country of India.
2. There can be no categorization of "Hazardous" and "Non Hazardous" industries where children in the age group of 14 –18 years could work as work itself is hazardous for the growth and development of children below the age of 18 years.
3. We as children cannot take up work after school hours as we need time to play, take rest and involve in other extracurricular activities.
4. We recommend that the traditional arts and crafts to be offered as vocational course within the common school syllabus so the continuation of family's' traditional occupation will not be the responsibility of few children.
5. We understand that parents have the responsibility over children but would not accept the penalty imposed on parents. Rather we would request the Government to ensure

employment and decent wages for the adults all throughout the year and strengthen our families so they could fulfill our rights.

During the interface which was part of the consultation, children presented the above recommendations to Sri. Onkar Sharma, Regional Labour Commissioner, Government of India. Listening to the recommendations, the Regional Labour Commissioner accepted the children's view and said that it is right to consult and have more direct communication with children to get their opinion whenever Government develops policies related to children.

Besides the recommendations on the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016 children have given few key messages to be presented at the Global Conference

1. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 should be extended up to 18 years and implemented 100 percent in line with the norms and rules in both Private and Government Schools in all the States of India.
2. Participation of children to be ensured while drafting of all laws, policies, budget and programmes concerning children.
3. Principle of non-discrimination to be upheld as a key virtue in the country.
4. Government to take complete responsibility of ensuring the rights of children who are without families or protection and protection.
5. The rights enshrined in UNCRC to be ensured to all children in the country considering that India has ratified the convention.
6. Children must have easy access to schools pan India.
7. Government must help orphans so that they don't have to work at a young age.
8. Government must work towards providing sufficient means for livelihood to minimise displacement.

Note- A detailed report in the prescribed format will be submitted to the Time to Talk Campaign organisers by end of the month.