

# Delhi Declaration

on


## Area Based Approach for Creation of Child Labour Free Zones

**STOP**




**CHILD LABOUR**


*School is the best place to work*



---



*We, the participants of  
the National Conference  
on “Working towards the  
creation of Child Labour  
Free Zones” held in New  
Delhi, India, pledge to  
work for total abolition  
of child labour in all its  
forms and ensure that  
children enjoy their right  
to education.*



---

We strongly affirm that all children below the age of 18 years are born with equal rights and they have a right to childhood and to live with freedom and dignity. Any child not in school is a potential child labourer and all forms of child labour come under modern slavery.

We believe that this is possible and doable through adoption of an **Area Based Approach** which has its focus in a (geographical) area and makes use of community mobilisation and involvement of all functionaries of the system. Experience shows that it is possible to have all children be systematically withdrawn from work and (re)integrated into formal, full-time schools. From our experiences of over 20 years, we are convinced that this leads to creating **Child Labour Free Zones** which can inspire other areas to follow and in this way and build steps towards a child Labour Free India.

This Declaration calls upon all actors to strengthen the **Area Based Approach** laying the foundation for **Child Labour Free Zones**.

We draw strength from the volunteers and activists on the ground working relentlessly for abolition of child labour and from national movements such as CACL, Stop Child Labour Programme - India platform and from the global movements such as 'Stop Child Labour Programme – School is the Best Place to Work', Global March who are working with a firm conviction that children's right to education through full time formal schools up to higher secondary level must be attained.

As per Census of India - 2011, millions of children are still engaged in the labour force today. On the other hand, children who enrol in schools are dropping out at the rate of 47% before completing X standard or are irregular to schools and join the labour pool at an early age. They work in various occupations, visible and invisible for employers and their own family enterprises and as domestic work for others' families at the cost of their right to education. The amended CLPR Act doesn't benefit in achieving complete elimination of child labour, rather it justifies child labour under certain circumstances. **The goal of eliminating child labour can be attained only when all forms of child labour are made illegal.** In short there must be zero tolerance of child labour in all settings including family enterprises, and at all times.

Child labour is the denial of a child's right to education and putting them to work, that will harm the health, safety and morals of children. The elimination of child labour and the provision of formal full-time quality education are inextricably linked. Adding strength to this principle is the ground reality of an explosive demand for education in our country today. Poor parents see education as the only redemption from poverty and exclusion. These parents are making enormous sacrifices to send their children to schools. **We must take sides now and pledge to stand by the poor in their struggle for schools and education for their children as against the demand for child labour.**



The problem of gender parity in education is linked to the prevalence of child labour. Vast numbers of girls are engaged in domestic work. Early marriage also plays a strong role in preventing girls from entering and staying in school. **All efforts must be made to nullify child marriage by law.**

The task of abolishing child labour requires the concerted and coordinated effort of one and all in the government, civil society, and corporate sector. While the State has to firm up its investments in education and make abolition of child labour a non-negotiable, the civil society has to work through its networks and forums to reach out to children, their families and all others in the community, facilitating a dialogue with the system. Companies can and should play an important role in eliminating child labour, including down into their supply chain and link this where-ever possible to a broader area-based and sector approach. The latter would imply that companies seek co-operation with others – like government, agencies, trade unions, NGOs, Civil Society and local community groups – to be an effective partner in the eradication of child labour and the reintegration of children in the formal full-time school system. At the same time this cooperation can support and sustain the process (of getting children out of work and into school) as (when/where) it leads to improvement in the bargaining capacities of adult workers.

Joint and complementary action is needed by governments, Civil Society, NGOs, trade unions, companies, employers and other groups who are implementing programmes for elimination of child labour or campaigning to ensure that all children of ‘school-going age’ are entering school at the proper age and to avoid that children drop out before they are 18.

Every arrangement has to be made to integrate all children who have been left out or taken out of the school system to join schools and enter into an age appropriate class. **A message must be sent that no child is so old that he/she cannot get back to school.** Arrangements for residential bridge course camps, motivation centres and any other local initiative that emerges in the process of the campaign and mobilization needs to be taken up. **Efforts must be made to ensure that school policy shows respect to the first generation learner** with an abundance of flexibility and the removal of all barriers that come in the way of their continuation in school. **Schools must facilitate recreation and other activities for the children after school hours.**

We, through this national forum take a categorical stand on the **total abolition of child labour and ensuring children’s right to education in full time formal schools as a non-negotiable principle.** We strongly feel that if we pledge our resources charged with this imagination and the moral force to stand by children, **child labour free India** would not be a distant dream.

New Delhi  
24<sup>th</sup> August, 2016