



South Asian March Against Child Trafficking





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Foreword



The most illicit trade of our times, human trafficking, cannot be stopped without a mass movement. Law is important, and equally important is the political will substantiated with adequate resources and a prompt and honest enforcement mechanism. But, until and unless the very ordinary people are prepared to say 'NO' to the sale and slavery

of children, women, and men, complete abolition of this inhuman crime will remain a distant dream.

In the past, we experienced the success of our long marches against child labour and for education in India and across the globe in affecting long term policy and practice change in addition to generating mass awareness. The victims of slavery can not remain unnoticed or unheard when they are out on the streets to challenge the violence perpetrated upon them, as was the case with our recent march, the South Asian March Against Child Trafficking, which began in Kolkata on February 25th, 2007 and reached Delhi on March 22nd, 2007. Some of the young heroes who lead this mass action were Rakesh, a 12 year-old boy trafficked from Bihar to Punjab and enslaved for 6 years in agriculture; Pushpa, a 14 year-old young girl sold for a mere Rs. 200 from her village in Jharkhand to work in Patna; Meena, trafficked from Dang province in Nepal for child domestic labourer and later in a 'cabin restaurant' in Kathmandu; Najma, a trafficking victim from Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Abdul, a Nepalese boy trafficked to Delhi to work for more than 16 hours a day in a zari unit. I salute these child leaders and all the 150 core marchers who have built a movement in the entire Indo-Bangladesh-Nepal border areas.

It was inspiring and encouraging when Krishna, a shopkeeper near the bus stand in Murshidabad came to me with tears in his eyes and handed me a piece of paper, on which he wrote: "I have entertained several customers who were accompanied by some young children, but I never knew that this was human trafficking. From now on, I pledge to raise my voice against it and will call the police". When I announced to cancel the rest of the programs, assuming the marchers were wet and must be cold, a slum girl spontaneously said, "Our cold is nothing

compared to the scathing heat of slavery in which many of our brothers and sisters are burning everyday and are being bought like animals."

We interfaced with at least 1,000,000 people during the course of our 5,200 KM march. The enthusiastic and computer-savvy professional youth of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) calculated the distance of the march to be 2,500 KM before it began. On the penultimate day, when I asked them to see the meter readings of our accompanying vehicles they were surprised to see that we had already covered more than double! How can they think that when we touch the remote villagers and communities, the enthused people will not let us remain on highways but take us to the interior hamlets? Our experiences and learning are reported briefly in this document.

This report cannot capture the depth of suffering and pain shared by hundreds of mothers and fathers who have lost their children to trafficking, the expectations of the common villagers and the passers-by, the power of coming together out on the streets, or the colours of smiles and the music of hearts of the tiny successes en route. The report will provide a sense of the pulsating vibrations generated from the numerous incidents that we witnessed during the march.

NGOs big and small, celebrities, various religious priests, parents, teachers and workers' organisations, politicians and Parliamentarians, bureaucrats, diplomats and officials from the UN agencies, joined hands and hearts with the South Asian children in support of this march. We know that it is just a successful beginning of a long battle. BBA, Global March Against Child Labour along with their partners and supporters are committed to fight this battle until trafficking and all other forms of slavery are buried deep and become history. A small proof of this commitment was the resounding 'NO' that the core marchers shouted at me during the culmination in Delhi, in response to my advice that they should rest for a while as they must be tired. They raised their hands to go on. I had never seen such a loud chant and strong determination in their whole bodies, even during the march.



Kailash Satyarthi





Background



South Asia has emerged as the hub of human trafficking, especially the trafficking of children. It is a source, destination and transit area. Poverty, illiteracy, regional imbalances, lack of good governance in certain regions, absence of strong legislations and effective enforcement, large-scale corruption in the border areas, demand for cheap labour, social exclusion and disparity makes this region trafficking prone. Although there is no comprehensive study on the extent of the problem, according to an UNICEF estimate, at least 50,000 children are trafficked from Nepal and another 40,000 children are trafficked from Bangladesh via the state of Bihar in India alone.

Trafficking is not exclusively a 'sex issue'. Trafficking in persons is modern-day slavery. The common denominator of trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit a person for commercial sex or for the purpose of subjecting a victim to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, or forced labour. The use of force or coercion can be direct and violent or psychological.

Trafficking is a highly lucrative business. The ILO estimates that the total illicit profits produced annually by trafficked forced labourers are around USD 32 Billion. This means an average of USD

13,000 per year for each forced labourer. The largest profits more than USD 15 billion are made from people trafficked and forced to work in industrialised countries. A study by the ILO found that, of the estimated 9.5 million victims of forced labour in Asia, less than 10 percent are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Worldwide, less than half of all trafficking victims are part of the sex trade. These figures support the view that trafficking thrives because it is lucrative and that policy measures to combat this scourge must include the confiscation of the financial assets of those involved in trafficking across or within borders.

In economic exploitation or forced labour, 56 per cent of the victims are female while 44 per cent are male. In forced commercial sexual exploitation, 98 per cent of the victims are women. Children account for 40 to 50 per cent of all trafficked victims. Besides commercial sex work, millions of such children are engaged in domestic labour, street restaurants or dhabas, carpet industry, agricultural work, zari embroidery, and circuses.

Most groups concerned with human trafficking focus on women and sexual exploitation and do not reach the males in the fields, mines and construction jobs or even the women and children in sweatshops and domestic servitude.



Marches - Strategy for Social Awakening and Awareness



The case against child labour has gained enormous support and help from marches or *yatra* massive grassroots awareness and advocacy campaigns. For example, in 1998, the 80,000 km physical global march against child labour spanned 103 countries and led to the formulation of ILO Convention 182 against worst forms of child labour.

In the Indian subcontinent, marches have always had tremendous success. In 1992, Bachpan Bachao Andolan organised its first march against child labour from Nagar Uttari to Delhi, covering the heart of the carpet industry.

The Shiksha Yatra (Education March) in 2001 covered the length and breadth of the country (15,000 km) from Kerala to Delhi. It spread awareness that education is the tool to eliminate child labour.

Marches have thus been tools of social change in the world, especially for problems affecting the marginalised sections of the society. The South Asian March Against Child Trafficking was planned for and spreading awareness against trafficking of children from Bangladesh and Nepal to India, as well as intra-border (within India) trafficking.





South Asian March Against Child Trafficking

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement) in association with its key partners Global March Against Child Labour, BSAF (a conglomeration of 250 Bangladeshi NGOs), BASE and CWIN from Nepal, and hundreds of civil society partners organised a 5,000 km long physical march starting from Kolkata on 25 February 2007 and culminating in New Delhi on 22 March 2007 to raise awareness on the issue of child trafficking. South Asian March Against Child Trafficking (referred hereinafter as Anti-Trafficking March) covered cities, towns and villages along the route with about 150 core marchers, half of them being child victims of trafficking for forced labour along Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bangladesh borders.

More than a million children, women and men have been touched by the Anti-Trafficking March, making it the largest peoples' campaign dedicated to trafficking of children for forced labour. During the March, there were at least two public meetings a day. At least 50,000 children, women and men attended

each public meeting. Throughout the march, people pledged to support the Anti-Trafficking March, the end of trafficking of children, and to promote the education of all children. The March has successfully rescued scores of children from being trafficking along the route of the March and have helped police arrest the traffickers.

Trafficking for forced labour needs to be addressed as a criminal issue with a human rights perspective. Previously, trafficked people, particularly those who were not trafficked for forced prostitution, have been treated as criminals and as illegal immigrants. As such, they have been arrested and deported, sometimes even prosecuted for entering a country illegally or for holding fake travel documents. Their traffickers may have been convicted of alien smuggling, but were rarely held accountable for the numerous human rights violations that accompany trafficking, including servitude, slavery, rape, and physical and psychological abuse.



Media Launch

19-22 February 2007

The week before the March, press announcements were sent out across India to inform the common masses, civil society, and media about the Anti-Trafficking March, which would begin in Kolkata on 25 February 2007, in order to gain support and participation.

New Delhi: On 19 February 2007, at the media launch, Simon Steyne, International Trade Union Confederation representative in ILO and Global March, said, "Trafficking is always a subset of forced labour because its key characteristics are coercion or deception. Comprehensive measures from [the] government's end to protect human rights of the

victims and prosecute the exploiters and abusers is the need of the hour."

Kailash Satyarthi, Chairperson Global March Against Child Labour and founder of BBA said, "The objectives of the march are to generate awareness and push for a policy change on the aspect of massive child trafficking for forced labour. Trafficking has so far been understood only in the context of commercial sexual exploitation. It is now necessary to focus on trafficking for forced labour and slavery."

Kolkata: On 23rd February 2007, at the media launch, eminent social activist and actress Nandita Das



pledged her support for the Anti-Trafficking March and urged the country to give its full support to the Anti-Trafficking March. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Das said, "Child trafficking for forced labour is a hidden issue, with people in the rural areas still ignorant and thus vulnerable to being trafficked for forced labour. There is no regional protocol to prohibit trafficking of children."

Calling for a regional protocol on trafficking for forced labour, Mr. Satyarthi said, "We demand a law enforcing immediate rehabilitation of victims and prosecution of traffickers and exploiters."

Mr. Manabendra Mandal, ATSEC, Ms. Indrani Sinha, Sanlaap and Alok Mitra, Women's Interlink

Foundation, and children also spoke at the launch

Simultaneously, several other media events and press conference were organised at different places across the country. BBA's chairperson, Mr. R. S. Chaurasia, led activities in Mirzapur (U.P.), while the national secretary, Ms. Suman, addressed a widely attended press conference at Agra (U.P). Other leaders including Rajendra Gunjal, Convenor of Rajasthan, Sanjay Mishra, Convenor of Jharkhand, Dr. Ramakant Rai, National Coordinator of Ethical Trade Campaign, and Ms Sumedha Kailash, Director of Bal Ashram also addressed the press at Jaipur, Ranchi, Lucknow and Meerut respectively.





25 February 2007

Kolkata: More than 10,000 marchers congregated at Shahid Minar, Kolkata to flag off the Anti-Trafficking March. These marchers were from various civil society organisations, including ATSEC, Sanlaap, A2W2, Loreto School and WIF. Speaking at the flagging off ceremony, Ravi Prakash Verma, senior Member of Parliament and member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on trafficking law, said, "Human trafficking is a global tragedy which cannot be accepted in any form. As an MP and the standing committee member, I pledge to make all possible efforts to make trafficking for forced labour illegal." He also promised to strengthen the mass movement. He said, "The March is the true translation of the Gandhian spirit into action in this year of Satyagraha's centenary."

Before the Anti-Trafficking March was flagged off by notable Bengali actress June Maliya, Manabendra Mandal, Chairperson of ATSEC South Asia, said, "Trafficking is a crime against humanity, be it for commercial sexual exploitation, human organ transplantation, child labour, or for slavery like practices. Let us all join our hands together to combat against this organised crime".

Thousands of supporters joined the march in Kolkata with colourful banners and placards chanting slogans such as "Stop child trafficking", "ensure education and rehabilitation of child victims", "jail is the only place for traffickers", "dignified rehabilitation of victims is their right", and "make a law to stop trafficking for forced labour".

18 March 2007

Palia Kalan: On the way at Paliya Kalan the marchers were welcomed by Mr Dutta Ram Bharghav, Member of Parliament, Paila. Many Parliamentarian, dignitaries, representatives of NGOs and others came to welcome the March. Ms. Suman, member of Vanvasi Sewa Sanasthan said that we should work for children and women and do are best to empower the deprived and downtrodden. Mr. Ram Pravesh, a Member of Parliament, said that the March will end only when we will achieve our goal. We have to fight and do whatever it takes to abolish child trafficking. Mr Chaubey, Director of Vanvasi Sewa Sansthan said that his organisation had carried out a survey on the border areas of India and Nepal sometime back and it was found that 4607 children between the ages of 8-16 work away from home in hotels, roadside eateries homes and as bonded labourers with many working in metropolitan cities. He stated that unemployment and no means of livelihood is one of the main reasons along with poverty and illiteracy for child trafficking. Mr Gopal (Region head) said, "60 years had passed since we got freedom but we are still fighting against poverty and crime. The justice of our country is being sold. So whosoever government comes will not make any difference until the citizens of India put their foot forward against injustice and corruption. Today the biggest problem is illiteracy and government should make provisions for free and compulsory education. Mahatma Gandhi was alone in the movement but people joined him. Kailash Satyarthi, you have started a movement and we will join and strengthen your fight against child trafficking for forced labour."

Dhangari (Nepal): The Anti-Trafficking March entered Nepal from Dhangari. Mr Ravi Prakash



Verma (Member of Parliament) also marched with the core marchers. Zila Bal Kalyaan Samiti and BASE welcomed the march with beautiful dancers performing Mungrawa dance of Rana community. Mr Ramanshrisht (Zila Bal Kalyaan Samiti) said that the effort by BBA will definitely be fruitful and we all believe in it. Abdul Rayees Khan former director of Allahabad University said, "With the inspiration and guidance of Mr Ravi Prakash Verma who has joined this march, we in the Indian Parliament are trying to build a new law for child trafficking, today I want to request Nepal political parties to raise this issue in their Parliament also".





26 February 2007

Barasaat: The local NGO OFFER supported the Anti-Trafficking March at Barasaat. At the meeting, Reshma, a young girl from Sanlaap's center, addressed the 500 marchers: *"Let us think if it was your child who is trafficked, it was your child who is trafficked into prostitution or to work as a child labourers in somebody's home or in a restaurant. Isn't it important for all of us, and all the children to dream for a better future, to dream of a better life, to get an education and be part of the progress of our nation".*

From Rabindra Bhawan, the marchers at Barasaat marched to Dak Bunglow, chanting slogans in Bengali.

At Dak Banglow, the marchers addressed the gathered public and performed plays denouncing child trafficking and slavery.

Ranaghat: Then the marchers travelled to Ranaghat, singing songs and raising slogans through the mobile mikes and loud speakers along the way. The marchers were welcomed by a team of Border Security Force personnel. The Municipal Councillor of Ranaghat's Nadia District welcomed the marchers with garlands and flowers. The people of Ranaghat were sensitised about trafficking and slavery through songs, dance and public addresses.







27 February 2007

On the 3rd Day, the Anti-Trafficking March moved through Krishnanagar, Bethuadahari, Palassy of Nadia District and Rejinagar and Berhampore in Murshidabad District, both the districts bordering Bangladesh. Large-scale trafficking of children takes place in the areas from Bangladesh to India and from this area to Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai (the urban commercial centers). Children are sent through placement agencies to these metropolitan cities. Through the placement agencies boys and girls are sold to work as child domestic labourers or the pretty girls are sold to brothel owners as commercial sexual workers.

Krishnanagar: The District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, and other members of the local organising team welcomed the marchers to Rabindra Bhawan.

Omkar Singh Meena, District Magistrate, suggested, “We must activate the panchayats [village governing body] of the border villages and organise them and bring them together with us. This would be the most important strategy of local mobilisation as they would be involved and also help in our endeavour to stop trafficking of children. The police station houses in the border villages should also become active in this to stop the crime of trafficking of children for prostitution or labour exploitation or any other purposes”.

Hari Krishna Kusumakar, Superintendent of Police, remarked that in West Bengal, a large number of children especially girls are trafficked into prostitution. He further said that it was difficult to prosecute the traffickers due to the lack of witnesses

in cases of trafficking. He reiterated the need for police sensitivity and training in handling cases of trafficking.

Bethuadahari: In the evening, the March reached the town of Bethuadahari. Again at the public gathering people were motivated through speeches, recitation, songs and slogans to pledge their support to the March and against child trafficking and slavery. It was a heart-warming scene when the police personnel cordoning the meeting joined the children, women and men to fight against exploitation of children.

Palassy: At Palassy, the historic place of the first battle against the British occupation of India, the marchers were welcomed with garlands and showers of flowers by the local organizer, BAPU. The children chanted slogans and songs against the menace of child trafficking and child labour while marching through the town's critical points in the trafficking chain and supply route, such as trucking points (places where trucks load and unload their goods) and along highway NH-24.

Rejinagar: The marchers performed songs and a play on the theme of child trafficking.

Behrampore: The marchers were again welcomed by the women activists of the local organisation with flowers and tikka. Even after travelling more than 150 kms through the day and having performed at numerous places, the super-charged children enthusiastically sang songs and danced through the night.





28 February 2007

Behrampore: The Anti-Trafficking March moved through Behrampore and Umarpur in Murshidabad District, which are the most child trafficking prone regions of the India, serving as source and route for the traffickers. It also has endemic migration of adults and trafficking. About 1,000 children are trafficked from Murshidabad to the metros of Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and to Arab countries every year, mainly for domestic work and child marriages for girls, and to work in construction or hotels / dhabas for boys. Children are also trafficked to work as child beggars in Mecca and other Arab countries. Of the 58% child marriages that happen in West Bengal, the majority are in Mursidabad. Young girls and women are also trafficked across the Bangladesh border for work and

marriage, and are sold off once they cross over the border into Murshidabad. The Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO), noted social workers, members of NGOs and Murshidabad Adivasi Gramin Jankalyan Samiti participated with their beneficiary children in the March. After the public meeting, the marchers moved through the town of Behrampore, chanting slogans and distributing flyers in Bengali. At Girija crossing, the marchers addressed 1,000 gatherers. A large number of policemen also assembled at the gathering.

Umarpur: At Umarpur (mid-way between Behrampore and Malda), there was a street gathering by the marchers. While child marriage is endemic to the entire border regions of West Bengal, boys are



trafficked from these regions to work as goldsmiths in Mumbai, in hotels / dhabas and other unorganised sectors. It is also a transit route from Bangladesh for trafficking to the Middle East girls for domestic service and boys for forced beggary.

In an Interview, Mr Niranjan Das, Manager of Sonar Bangla Restaurant in Umarpur, commented, "It is good that this 'andolan' (movement) is going through this area. The general public will support your efforts in this area, as the problem of trafficking is very grave in Lalgola, Bhagwangola and other nearby areas. There is a BSF camp there at Ramnagar but the

magnitude of child trafficking is still very high". In response to a question regarding the occupations of the trafficked children, he said "All kinds.... The middlemen promise money and education to the poor illiterate families. The families being poor get enticed and send their children and loose them forever. Girls are sent from Umarpur and border villages from India to Bangladesh. From there, they are somehow taken to Pakistan and ultimately end up in Mecca or Saudi Arab or any of the Arab countries. The situation is really bad as the police are also hand in glove with the traffickers often times."



01 March 2007

Malda: Malda is amongst the poorest districts of West Bengal. It is a source, transit, and destination place for trafficked victims. Local NGOs estimate that approximately 83,000 children are routed through Malda from Bangladesh, Murshidabad and Uttar Dinajpur of West Bengal. Further in Gobindpur block of Malda district, Darshan (a local NGO) in a survey found that 200 children are trafficked each year. In Malda, a majority of the boys are trafficked for forced labour (child labour), mostly in zari embroidery in Mumbai and other unorganised sectors in metros cities.

The marchers held a meeting at the Town Hall. Present at the meeting were members of the local administration, civil society, academia, children and adults. CCRP (Coalition for Child Rights Protection) and Prajaak were the main organisers in Malda. After the meeting, the March covered the entire length of the main market of Malda spanning approximately 10 kms. Chanting slogans, distributing flyers, pasting

posters, the marchers touched approximately 50,000 children, women and men. This was followed by a large public meeting of another 20,000 children, women and men at Netaji Statue. The enthusiastic gathering of people, sensitised to the ills of trafficking and forced labour, pledged to stop trafficking of children and ensure education to all.

Bihar- West Bengal Border: The March was welcomed at the Bihar border by the BBA Bihar unit, UNICEF Bihar, local NGOs and children and women. The meeting was organised at a Madrassa (Muslim learning centre) with the presence of more than 1,550 students. Impressed by the March, the Imam of the Madrassa pledged against trafficking. After the evening namaz (prayer), the students gathered again to participate in the meeting.

Raigunj: At Raigunj, the marchers witnessed a grand welcome by the local organizers St. Johns' Ambulance. The whole town was decorated with

banners, posters and large welcome archways along the market. Raigunj has a large magnitude of child trafficking and child labour. Child labour is prevalent in tea gardens and involved in beedi (tobacco) rolling. Girls are sold for marriage to the Middle East and boys are mainly trafficked for gold smith work to Mumbai and other gold smith centres in the country. The meeting took place at the Town Hall (Bidhan Manch), with the presence of the Additional District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police. Children

from various NGOs and schools performed cultural activities. The gathering pledged to end trafficking of children, women, and men for all purposes. The Marchers marched through the entire length of the Raigunj main city, covering a distance of 9 kms and reaching to more than 30,000 people. After the rally and the subsequent meetings, the March left for Kishanganj to join the other team of marchers, and reached Kishanganj well past midnight.



02 March 2007

Kishangunj (Bihar): Kishangunj is one of the poorest districts in the country. The literacy rate is 17 percent, with a female literacy rate of 3.4 percent, the lowest in the country. There is an endemic child labour and child trafficking problem in this region. The District Magistrate (DM) pledged support to the March and said that it is high time that education emerged as a priority in Kishangunj. He also said that child labour should be taught about in the schools.

Siliguri (West Bengal): More than 1,500 children braved the heavy rains in Siliguri to shout slogans against child trafficking and welcome the marchers. Siliguri in Darjeeling district of West Bengal is one of the larger cities and a commercial centre serving as a source, transit and destination for trafficking of children for forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Due to its proximity to both Nepal and Bangladesh, children from these countries are taken to different urban centres in India for domestic labour, prostitution, construction work, and other unorganised sectors. Child labour is also rampant in the tea gardens of Darjeeling district. Kailash Satyarthi addressed the rally standing in the rain with the children. On behalf of all the marchers, he thanked the children of Siliguri for being a source of inspiration for everyone by their unwavering commitment to the cause of ending human trafficking. He emphasised the need for adults to take

guidance from the children and work harder towards creating a law that prosecutes and convicts traffickers in a time bound fashion and with minimum defined punishments. ATSEC South Asia and Women's Interlink Foundation expressed their solidarity and happiness to be partners in the March and commented that it is high time trafficking became a people's issue and a people's movement, the March being a step in that direction.

After the meeting the marchers met a man whose daughter had been trafficked more than one and half years ago. This man had heard about the march in Kishanganj and had followed the march to Siliguri, seeking help in the rescue of his daughter. He was given legal advice and his complaint was recorded on which action will be taken in due course.

In the evening, Subhash Guha, a human rights activist from Siliguri, came to meet the children. He had seen the buses of the March and as he had been a core marcher during the Global March Against Child Labour. He followed the buses to their destination and when he met Mr. Satyarthi, he started crying. He has been working for child rights for more than 10 years and it was a dream come true for him to meet his hero. Subhash then joined the March.







03 March 2007

Kakarbitta Border (Nepal): The March crossed the Pani Tanki/Kakarbita border. The March was welcome at the border first by the local police that escorted the march till the No Man's Land separating India and Nepal. The march was first received at the Nepal border by the local NGO, Awaaz. After traditional Nepalese welcome, the marchers crossed over into Nepal where they were received by CWIN Nepal, BBA partners and National Human Rights Commission of Nepal. The marchers arrived in Nepal with more than 500 people waiting at Kakarbita market. In a public meeting there, the people took a pledge against child trafficking. Amidst high tension due to observance of a bandh and escorted by a team of Police and National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, the marchers made their way forward to Biratnagar and held a rally there..







04 March 2007

Biratnagar: Holi* is one of the biggest festivals in both India and Nepal and the children started playing it early in the morning. The celebrations continued amongst songs and dancing until 11.00 A.M. when the marchers were invited to play Holi by the Biratnagar Chief Development Officer, Mr. Modraj Dotel, the administrative and judicial head of the district. The local organisations Mahila Adhikar Sushasan Shantiko Laagi, Rajbanshi Samaj Vikas Samiti, ABC Nepal, CPC Nepal, Maiti Nepal, Jagaran Nepal, Nepal Aadiwaasi Janjati Samanvayak Samiti, Biratnagar and others welcomed the marchers. Local children sang welcome songs and shouted slogans. Subol Khanal, a child core marcher from CWIN, said that even on Holi we must remember all the children that are not able to celebrate Holi as they are in slavery. Neera Kumari from BBA urged all the adults to work towards stopping trafficking of children. The Chief Development Officer pledged his support in the fight against trafficking and thanked all the marchers for coming to his house and making it one of his most memorable Holi celebrations.

* Holi is a festival observed by all without any distinction of caste, creed, status, sex or age and is reflective of a time when everyone comes together forgetting all the differences between them in order to rejoice in the day's activities. People entertain themselves by splattering coloured water and flinging coloured powder on their friends, relatives, neighbours and even unknown passers-by.





05 March 2007

Biratnagar (Nepal): The day started with very good news from Siliguri. Twelve child victims of trafficking were rescued from Siliguri based on the tip-off by a person who had participated in and was influenced by the Anti-Trafficking March.

Gauri Pradhan, President of CWIN Nepal, emphasised the need for regional cooperation at all levels, especially at the mass level. The March was also welcomed by the children of Purvanchal Anath Ashram. The march then moved to the Indian border Jogbani.

Forbesgunge: The rally in Forbesgunge started at Apne Aap Women's Worldwide office and ended at the railway station. Former child labourers turned activists of BBA's Mukti (Liberation) Caravan performed a play on child trafficking.

Araria: At Araria, the Anti-Trafficking March was

received at the district border by activists of Nehru Yuva Kendra with garlands, slogans, and banners. Through Araria, the Anti-Trafficking March entered one of the poorest areas in the country including the districts of Madhepura, Saharsa, and Purnia. Thousands of child labourers from these areas have been rescued by BBA. After marching through the street of Araria, the March reached Subhash Chand Stadium where a public meeting was held.

The chief guest of the meeting was the Head of Jila Parishad (District Welfare Committee) Shagufta welcomed the marchers with great exuberance and said that thousands of children are trafficked from Araria for domestic labour and other forms of slavery. She pledged all support to the march. The District Coordinator of the Nehru Yuva Kendra talked about the organization's anti-trafficking and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. Ramakant Rai, Coordinator



of the Ethical Trade Initiative of BBA, thanked the organisers and urged the people present to pledge to never use the goods made and services rendered by children. Mr R. S. Chaurasia, Chairperson of BBA, explained the inter-linkages between poverty, child trafficking and child labour.

While the speeches were going on, BBA Activist Neeraj noticed a person at the railway station with two children in suspicious circumstances. He immediately called BBA National Secretary Vinay Singh and together they followed the children and stopped the man accompanying them. While Neeraj engaged the man in conversation, Vinay called the railway protection force and Bhuwan, BBA National Secretary and Advocate. Upon inquiry it was found that the children were being trafficked from Forbesgunge to Ludhiana (Punjab). The children had been told that they were going to Kurukshetra in Haryana, but when Bhuwan checked their tickets, it was found that their train tickets had been purchased for another state Punjab. It has become a growing trend in the recent past that the children from poor families in Bihar are trafficked for bondage in Punjab. After the parents of the two children had been called, one of the leaders of the Anti-Trafficking March, Rakesh, 12, who had been trafficked under similar condition and was rescued after more than six years of bondage by BBA, explained the reality to the children and their parents. Bhuwan immediately filed a former complaint and the traffickers were booked under the relevant laws of trafficking. The children were taken to the RPF headquarter at Jogbani before they could be handed over to their parents.



06 March 2007

Purnia: The March moved through Araria, Purnia, Madhepura and Saharsa of Bihar. The DM was scheduled to flag off the March but before he arrived, local people complained that the DM himself employed child labourers in his house. BBA local coordinator Afsana Parveen flagged off the March. When the Anti-Trafficking March reached Kasturba Gandhi School, little children of 7-9 years joined in the Yatra, shouting slogans and leading the march. A meeting in the village of Harda was organised by Harijan Aadiwaasi Shikshan Prashikshan Kalyan Sansthan, Purnia.

Saharsa: The journey from Purnia to Saharsa was very tiring as the roads were in bad condition. The Anti-Trafficking March was welcomed en route at a village by the local villagers who had heard about the March. Addressing the villagers, Kalu, a former bonded

labourer from Madhepura who was rescued by BBA and is now a stalwart in BBA's the fight against trafficking and slavery, explained trafficking to the villagers. All the villagers and the children took a pledge not to let any trafficker misguide them and to deal with any trafficker who comes to the village or nearby areas with severity.

The road to Saharsa was jammed due to an accident, and the Anti-Trafficking March got stalled. Mr. Satyarthi took a hitch ride on a motorcycle to reach the meeting venue where more than 2,000 people had been waiting for hours. Former child trafficking victims who had been rescued and rehabilitated by BBA were leading the massive rally. The meeting culminated in a pledge by more than 300 former trafficked victims (children) that they would not let any child be trafficked from their villages.







07 March 2007

Saharsa: The Anti-Trafficking March moved through Saharsa, Khagaria and Begusarai in Bihar. The rally in Saharsa was organised by the local chapter of BBA along with Koshi Lok Manch, local voluntary organizations, and ATSEC. The marchers chanted slogans and patriotic songs claiming their rights to education, freedom, and food, while sensitising the local public of the Saharsa on the evils of trafficking.

At Khagaria District Court, the judicial officers joined the Anti-Trafficking March. The DM also joined and announced his official and personal support to stop the exploitation and trafficking of the children in the district. The Anti-Trafficking March was welcome by the local NGOs including SAMTA, Ganga-Koshi Bal Sewa Sansthan, Alp Sankhyak Utthan Avam Kalyan Samiti, and Khagaria. Representatives of the various organisations addressed the assembly.

Begusaria: The Anti-Trafficking March reached Dinkar Bhawan, where a public meeting was held with a huge gathering. The meeting was started with the participation of local organizations, including Bihar Gramin Jagrukta Abhiyan Samiti and Nehru Yuva Kendra. Local government officers and representatives of religious institutions also welcome the March. Kailash Satyarthi addressed the assembly, urging the formation of People's Vigilance Committees to abolish all forms of child exploitation and abuse as well as the enactment and implementation of legislation.



08 March 2007

Begusaria: At Begusarai, the Honourable Chief Judicial Magistrate, Mr. A. P. Tripathi, gave the green signal to the Anti-Trafficking March. In his remarks, he assured full cooperation of the judicial system to abolish child labour and child trafficking for the purpose of exploitation.

Samastipur: At Vidyapati Nagar, the Anti-Trafficking March was welcomed by Sewa Mahila Bal Vikas Kendra with a traditional custom of putting colour on the forehead and handmade traditional caps made by local women on the heads of the marchers.

Muzaffarpur: At Muzaffarpur, the Anti-Trafficking March was welcome by the leading local organization, Adithi at Jubba Sahni Auditorium, where a public meeting was held on the occasion of International Women's day. Amongst the people present at the meeting were Arjunram (District Development Commissioner), Anurag (Deputy Collector), Nisha (Prayas Bharti Trust), Manbendra Mandal (ATSEC), Poonam (Mahila Samakhya), Ganesh Prasad Singh (ADITHI), and Anupam Srivastava (UNICEF).

Manbendra Mandal raised the issue of how laws exist but are not implemented. Nisha stressed education for all girls, participation of women in making women welfare and panel law, and restricting female foeticide. Anupam Srivastava stated in the assembly that approx. 23 lakh children are out of school in India but that no specific data has been ascertained in the case of child trafficking. In his keynote address, Kailash Satyarthi said that despite all the tall claims of high economic growth by the government, the menace of child trafficking is flourishing fast as a lucrative illicit trade in India. India has grown as source, destination and safe transit to other countries for child trafficking. Some parts of Bihar became a safe haven for traffickers and other criminal gangs. After the meeting, a big rally was started from Jubba Sahani Auditorium up to the Red Light Area of Muzaffarpur, alerting the public about the women and children trafficked for labour exploitation and illegal flesh trade.





09 March 2007

Maisi: At Maisi (Purvi Champaran), the Anti-Trafficking March was welcome by the organizations Dalit Adhikar Morcha and Samajik Sodh Avam Vikas Kendra. They provided the books on Right to Information Act and other informative literature.

Motihari: At Motihari, the Anti-Trafficking March was greeted by local organisations Mushar Vikas Kendra and Samajik Sodh Avam Vikas Kendra. Girija Devi from Nasha Mukti Abhiyan and Anita Devi from Mushar Vikash Kendra were present and spoke on the backward condition of the women, child, and dalits.





10 March 2007

Raxaul: Raxaul Station is the last station in India before Nepal. It is also a recognised transit point for trafficking of persons from Nepal and India for labour exploitation.

While the marchers addressed the public on the evils of trafficking and slavery, the people complained that through the Raxaul station trains leave carrying a large number of children from nearby villages in India and Nepal. On hearing this, the marchers, led by Kailash Satyarthi, entered the station. Satyagraha Express was stationed at the platform. Satyagraha was the name of Gandhi's Campaign for truth that started from the Champaran area. The train travels from Raxaul to New Delhi. As BBA activists entered the train coach, they saw at least two-dozen children. As the team started questioning the children, they saw that some adults were rounding off the children and fleeing the coach.

A heated argument erupted between some of the traffickers and the BBA activists. The traffickers started abusing and manhandling the BBA activists. After a long two-hour confrontation, nine children and twelve traffickers were taken to the Railway Protection Force Station. The police did not entertain the BBA activists at first, until Mr. Satyarthi intervened and spoke with the Deputy Superintendent of Police. As the police wasted time, three traffickers fled the police station with three children.

After a long legal discussion and argument, the police finally registered a complaint by the BBA and started questioning the traffickers. On interrogation, two of the traffickers confessed that they had regularly trafficked children from Sitamarhi, Motihari and nearby areas to work in zari (embroidery) units in Delhi. Another confessed that he used to traffic children to work in his workshop as well as sell them to other employers. All the others confessed to trafficking of boys for work.

The youngest boy rescued was only seven years old while the oldest was fourteen years old. All the boys were being trafficked to work in zari (embroidery) workshops in Delhi. A large number of children are working in slavery in zari sweatshops in Delhi, and between 2005- 2006 alone, more than 1500 children have been rescued from bonded labour by BBA in Delhi.

The rescued children have been handed over to their parents.

On talking with the locals of the area, it was discovered that a new trend in trafficking has emerged. Due to the recent rescue operations being conducted in zari workshops in Delhi by the BBA and its partners, the older workers are being forced by the employers to track the rescued boys and bring them back to the zari units. Unless they bring back the boys their payments are being refused.



The problem is also compounded by police inaction and connivance with the traffickers and employers. According to the locals, the police are bribed by the traffickers to turn a blind eye to the rampant trafficking of children intrastate as well as cross-border that takes place throughout Bihar.

Bettiah: Bettiah is one of the most important historical places in the March. Gandhi started his famous Satyagraha here. The meeting began at 3 pm in the heart of the city after being delayed for more than an hour due to the raid and that took place in Raxaul that the morning. The Zila Parishad Pramukh inaugurated the meeting, which was being attended by more than 500 local women and children.

While addressing the meeting, BBA state convener for Bihar, Ajoy Singh, welcomed all the marchers and lauded them for their work. He appealed to the locals to join hands with the marchers in making this campaign a success. The cultural team from Punjab gave a short performance.



11 March 2007

Bettiah: The Zila Parishad Pramukh welcomed the March in Bettiah. Before departing for Gorakhpur, the marchers observed a two minute silence to pay homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives for independence at Shaheed Smarak. Afterwards, the marchers started a rally in the main market of Bettiah. The rally went to the house where Gandhi had stayed for more than six months. The rally then departed for Gopalganj and Gorakhpur.



12 March 2007

Gorakhpur: Gorakhpur is notorious for trafficking children and women for commercial sexual exploitation. At Gorakhpur, three public meetings were held in which thousands of people participated. These meetings were organised with the help of BBA's co-partners Purvanchal GraminVikas Vigyaan Samiti, DISA, Ajjija Human Welfare and Cultural Society, and Childline. Father Jen Joes, Director of PGSS, welcomed the Anti-Trafficking March at the first public meeting and appealed to the government officials to have a regional protocol. Abhishek Pathak of Child Line said, "We will help BBA to take this movement to the United Nations."



13 March 2007

Lumbini (Sunauli Nepal): The Anti-Trafficking March moved through Gorakhpur and entered Lumbini (birth place of Lord Buddha in Nepal) through the Sanauli border area. The marchers received a warm welcome by Mr Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, the President of BASE and renowned activist of Nepal. A rally was held at the Nepal Border.



14 March 2007

Dang: The Anti-Trafficking March moved through Lumbini and entered Dang in Nepal. On the way, the March was welcomed at Butwal by the Maya Devi Technical Institute at Bhalbang by the BASE and at Lamhi by BASE where a public meeting was held. Kailash Satyarthi narrated to the participants of the meeting stories of the Nepalese girls who were trafficked into the Indian circuses. He further said that the scourge of child trafficking would end only if the community as a whole works towards abolishing it. The March then headed for Dang where it got a very warm welcome from the Dang BASE office. The welcome ceremony was filled with colours of different cultures of Rajasthan, Punjab, and Nepal.



15 March 2007

Dang: The rally taken out from the BASE Dang office kicked off with two traditional dance performances: the Mohti Dance by Meer Meer Yuva Club (a traditional dance to welcome guests) and the Badla Naach (a tribal dance with religious importance). The rally went through the market area of Dang and culminated in the Sheetalpur Chowk, where a public meeting was held. Mr. Krishn Gopal Gupta and Dr. Shramlal Chaudhari from BASE welcomed the marchers. Mr. Shramlal Chaudhari said that the difference between the rich and the poor is increasing and could be decreased only by equal and good quality education. The District Manager of NFO, Mr. Nauran Lamichhane, explained that Indian and Nepal Governments should penalise traffickers, and appropriate laws are to be enforced and implemented effectively. He also called on the people of Nepal to boycott the traffickers.

Nepalgunj: The Anti-Trafficking March left for Nepalgunj. On the way at Kohalpur the freed bonded labourers (Kamaiya community) welcome the Anti-Trafficking March. The Anti-Trafficking March finally reached Nepalgunj where the marchers were received by Mr. Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, President BASE and his team.





16 March 2007

Nepalgunj: The Anti-Trafficking March moved through Nepalgunj (Nepal) and Lakhimpur (Uttar Pradesh), where it was greeted with traditional Tharu Dance of Bandiya District from BASE office. Many dignitaries from Yuva Jagran Dang District, Civil Society Nepal, UNHR, Zila Bal Kalyan Samiti, and Madheshi Manch welcomed the March. More than 5,000 people were walking with the core marchers in the streets of Nepalgunj. It was a historical day in Nepal where all the organisations came at one platform together to fight against child trafficking.



During the public meeting Mr Krishna (President, Yuva Jagran Dang District) said, "Children should have pen and pencils in their hands, and not equipments to work. The time of education is being wasted in industries". Dya Ram Khander, country head of Civil Society of Nepal, said, "Every child's first right is education, this should be understood by everyone. Until the time traffickers are punished, our fight will not end, and we thank Bachpan Bachao Andolan for bringing this march to our town". Dilli Bhai Chaudhary said, "If we have some honour than we should fight against child trafficking because this is just a beginning. This fight will continue until a new law is made to combat child trafficking. Until now we were very patiently fighting, but now we appeal for legal help or else we will close West Nepal". Thousands of people pledged to boycott the traffickers from the town and will go to any limit to save children. The March left Nepalgunj for Lakhimpur. Mr Ravi Prakash Verma, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) welcomed the marchers in his area at Kheri.

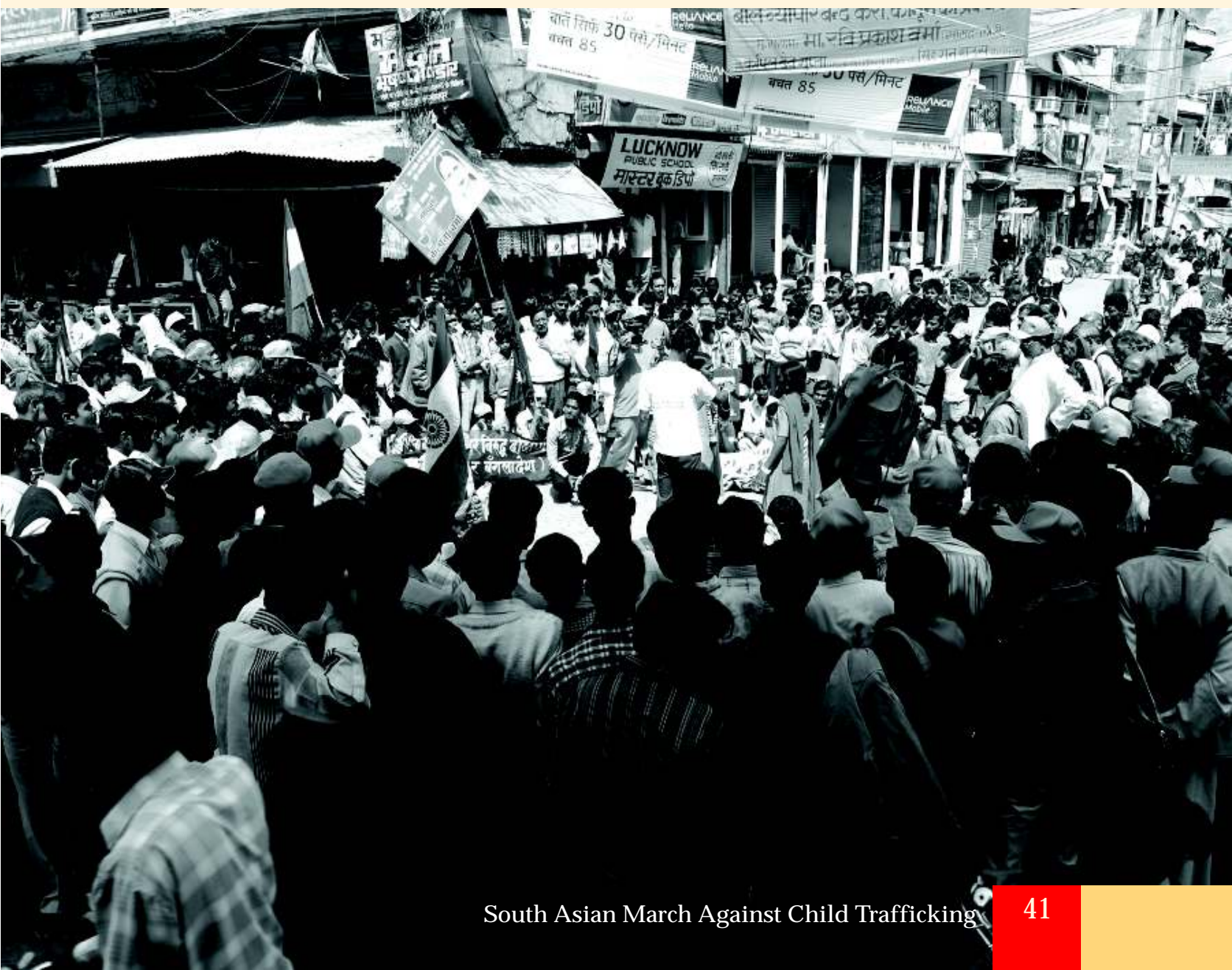
17 March 2007

Lakhimpur Kheri (India): A rally kicked off from Dharamshala to Bada Chauraha. Mr Ravi Prakash Verma, MP said, "In India we have laws but they are not implemented effectively. Now the time has come that we all take the responsibility to combat child trafficking, because the right place for a child is school".

The Anti-Trafficking March moved to Hall where many dignitaries from Social welfare, NGOs, civil society, Gurudwara welfare committee, and Kid's Rights came to welcome the March. While addressing the public, Ravi Prakash Verma said, "In

1986, the Child Labour Regulation and Prohibition Act came into force and a new amendment was made on 10th October 2006. BBA played a major role in this amendment and also International Convention ILO 182 through Global March Against Child Labour in which they covered 80,000 km. Now we believe that through this mass awakening we will be able to bring new law to combat child trafficking too".

Two child Activists, Devli and Subodh, told their story of being trafficked for a mere thousands rupees, and appealed to the authority to save the life of their friends who are being sold.





Mr Alexander Kohnstamm, Executive Director of KidsRights in The Netherlands, said, "We believe that a child has the same rights Mr. Kohnstamm stated that India is a developing country and will soon be

amongst the developed countries, but to do so the products from India should be free of child labour. He said that people in Europe should stop buying products that involve children in their making.



19 March 2007

Sitarganj: The marchers travelled from Dhangari to India (Sitarganj). Four public meetings were held on the way where thousands of people were addressed. The first public meeting was in Mahendra Nagar Bazaar. The regional office of BASE, Kanchanpur with the LDO Mr Ramesh Kumar Adhikari welcomed the march. While addressing the public, he said, "This is a golden opportunity that we have got to welcome this historical march in our town. This programme will not only bring change in laws but also help empowers the young generation so that they can also think about social issues". Yogya Raj Chaudhary said, "Until the time child trafficking will not be stopped, child labour cannot be abolished. Out of the trafficked only 10% are sold in different countries and 90% are sold in India. I request Mr Kailash Satyarthi to take serious steps to stop buying of children".

Banbassa (Nepal): Just after the march crossed the Nepal border, the Lion's Club organised a public meeting in Banbassa. The activists Mr. Chauhan and Mr. Kalra had recently rescued 150 trafficked children from this area. Mr. Satyarthi and Mr. Rai explained the meaning of child trafficking for forced labour and appealed to the Lions Club Members to make a Peoples' Vigilance Committee to keep a track on child trafficking.

Sitarganj: At Nanak Matta, Sitarganj the meeting was lead by the Mukti Caravan activists. The Mukti Caravan activists, themselves former child labourers, rescued and rehabilitated by BBA very enthusiastically questioned, "Like animals children are queued and sold in a market place where different commodities are sold. Can you imagine [the] same kind of market for selling of children? Don't they have a right to be educated or enlightened like a minister's son or rich person's daughter? All children have equal rights in the democratic government to get good quality education". The day came to an end with the pledge taken by shopkeepers, hotel, and restaurant owners that they will do their best to combat child trafficking in their areas.





20 March 2007

Sitarganj: The Anti-Trafficking March then moved for Sitarganj where a public meeting was addressed by Kailash Satyarthi and MLA of Sitarganj, Mr Narayan Pal. The MLA said that the traffickers in his area would be dealt with strictly. He appealed to the gathering to protest against child traffickers. After the meeting, a rally was moved in the city and it reached Rampur.

Rampur: At Rampur the Mukti Caravan team performed two street plays.



Muradabad: After that the Anti-Trafficking March moved to Muradabad where it was welcomed by Nehru Yuva Kendra and local NGOs.





21 March 2007

Meerut: The BBA team of Meerut welcomed the marchers at the medical college from where they proceeded to the main marketplace of the city. A huge rally was carried out along the marketplace and sensitised more than 10,000 people through the rally. At the gathering in the market, child leaders Rakesh from India who worked as an agricultural and domestic labourer, Najma from Bangladesh who was sold for the ridiculous amount of a few thousand rupees, and Abdul from Nepal who was rescued from a Zari unit in Delhi shared their stories. They exhorted the public to be sensitised about this issue and to join the fight against child trafficking.

The marchers later participated in a programme, which was attended by Elie Juoen from Education International, an international teacher's union coalition, local lawyers, leading local actress Suman Negi, amongst others. Elie Jouen pledged full support of the teacher's unions to the cause against child trafficking. Actress Suman Negi promised that she would raise her voice against the menace through her work and at programmes that she would participate in.

Ghaziabad: The marchers then moved to Ghaziabad where they received a grand welcome from the students and staff of the Mewar Institute. The Director, Narayan Singh Rao and the law faculty of the institute pledged full support to the marchers. Subol Khanal of Nepal narrated his story as a street child and child domestic worker in Kathmandu. The story of the children rescued from the stone quarries who had never touched paper or knew what freedom meant moved the audience immensely. After the meeting, the marchers moved towards the last leg of the journey, Delhi where they were enthusiastically received by BBA staff. The marchers set out to Mukti Ashram, the rehabilitation-cum-education centre of BBA on the outskirts of Delhi where they received a grand welcome in the night for successful completion of the Anti-Trafficking March.



22 March 2007

New Delhi: For the culminating ceremony of the March, the marchers and 5,000 supporters marched from Jantar Mantar to Parliament Street to submit their demands to the Parliamentarians. Devli, core marcher and former child labourer rescued by BBA, led the march and said, "My grandparents were trafficked to work in the stone quarries. My parents were born in the stone quarries, my brothers and I were born there. I did not know life beyond the stone quarry where we used to work and get beaten up. When I was rescued, I was given a banana. I had never seen a banana in my life before and thought it was a kind of potato. I now know the difference between a banana and a potato, but there are millions of children like me who are trafficked and enslaved. This March is for all those children like me. We want to end trafficking and slavery, join us to end these."

"Until and unless human trafficking is demystified and brought out of the heavy development jargon and project paradigm, and made an issue of common man's understanding and ownership, this fast growing evil cannot be stopped," said Kailash Satyarthi. He further urges, "The children themselves (victims of slavery and trafficking) have taken the first steps against trafficking. Now adults have to prove their genuine intentions. We call upon you to put an end to this heinous crime against humanity, collectively."

Statement to be read out on
behalf of Ad Melkert, Associate
Administrator, United Nations
Development Programme

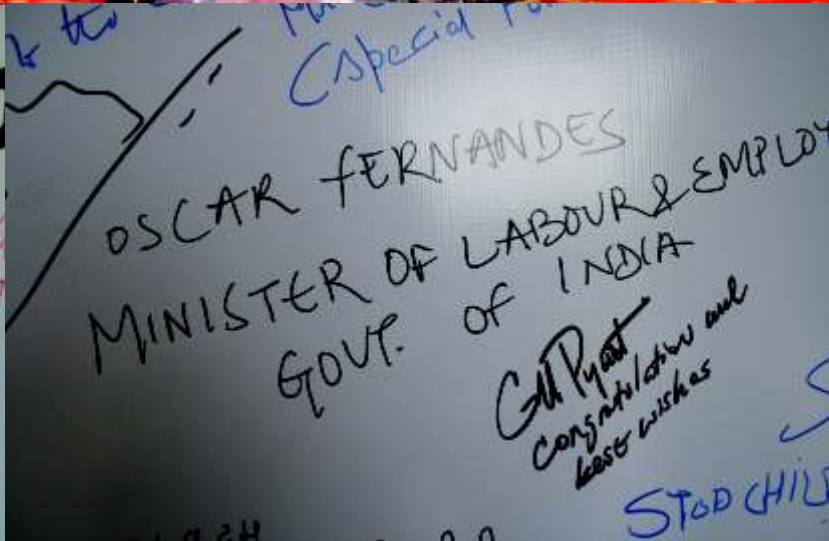
My fellow activists! (My fellow marchers!)

I am honored to join you in conveying the message loudly and clearly that child trafficking and slavery must stop!

As we speak, an estimated 1.2 million children are victims of child trafficking and slavery every year. Most of them are girls, unable to defend themselves.

This is unacceptable.

The UN Development Programme joins UNICEF and other in fighting for the freedom of these children. Seven years ago, 189 countries of the world agreed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. These MDGs refer directly to children: to their health, to their education and to a halt of child abuse in every way!





Message by ILO Director General Juan Somavia read by Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, ILO SRO Director

I send my warmest greetings to all of you who have mobilized and come together today and over the past weeks to send the unequivocal message that we must stop the trafficking of children now.

Congratulation to the Bachpan Bachao Andolan, the Global March Against Child Labour and all the organizers of this South Asian March against Child Trafficking. Congratulation to all those who have come out and joined the March in support of this cause.

Every year hundred of thousands of men, women and children are trafficked all over the world. They are commonly deceived, tricked, and subjected to abuse and exploitation. Yet too often the law is silent on these matters.

Human trafficking is a denial of humanity and human rights.

The trafficking of children is a collective shame, morally unacceptable wherever and whatever circumstances it occurs. It is one of the worst forms of child labour.

Societies that want a better future must protect all their children today. They cannot afford to deny children their health, their education, their childhood. And poverty is not an excuse for tolerating the intolerable. Things can be done differently.

Change begins with awareness and a will. This South Asian March has put the spotlight on this problem and showed what the trafficking of children means reality. The broad based support it has attracted us a clear expression of a will to bring about change.

When we come together around a cause. Change is possible. We have seen it in the movement against child labour communities have mobilized, societies have taken a stand, a global movement has emerged and together we are beginning to make inroads in many areas.

There is more to do and everyone can play a part, Governments, employers, trade unions, international organization, community and civil society organizations, each person all have a role to play in ending child trafficking.

So I agree you to:

- Sustain the awareness and outreach of this South Asian March
- Continue building alliances
- Build and strengthen the legal systems as a framework for actions,

And together let us put in place the policies that will allow parents to have decent work and children decent lives.

Thank you for commitment. The ILO stands with you in the fight against the trafficking of children.

Today, we are halfway to the 2015 deadline. With your energy I know we can make the MDGs a reality. Thank you so much for being here. Let us join hands as a sign of our commitment to stop child trafficking and slavery once and for all!

Present at the culmination ceremony were Mr. Oscar Fernandes, Minister of Labour and Employment; Ms. Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, Director ILO SRO bringing a message from the Director-General ILO, Juan Somavia; Mr. Geoffrey Pyatt, Deputy Chief US Embassy; Members of Parliament, Ravi Prakash Verma, Ganesh Prasad Singh; representatives of the UN agencies; NGOs; children and adults.

Addressing the audience Mr. Oscar Fernandes said: "Trafficking for forced labour is a hidden issue, but is rampant in the country. The ministry will take up this issue." He promised to support BBA and put forth the suggestions of the marchers when the amendment in Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956 comes for discussion in the Parliament.

Geoffrey Pyatt, the Deputy Chief, US Embassy, New Delhi said "I had hosted the Global march in Pakistan in 1998, and now I have the opportunity to participate in the culmination ceremony of this March. I am with this cause that BBA has taken up and will put forth the issue of trafficking for forced labour."

03 April 2007: Observations and recommendations submitted to the SAARC Summit

The demonstrators issued an open letter to the Head of State of the SAARC chair, calling for urgent action to stop the cross border and intra state child trafficking of persons. A report SAARC promises on human trafficking remain Inadequate and Undelivered was also released and submitted to the heads of the SAARC nations by the BBA.





Key Observations of the South Asian March Against Child Trafficking


1. The most appalling revelation of the March was that children cost less than cattle. It takes between Rs. 500-2000 to buy a child and exploit her/ him. Even a cow or a buffalo has a higher bid of Rs. 20,000. It is not only ironical that children 'cost' lesser than animals, it is a shame that they are traded like animals.
2. There is a clear ignorance about trafficking among all sections of the society. There is no recognition of the problem, and it is not within the radar of any common person or even the civil society at large. It has been even confused with the problem of 'traffic management' on roads.
3. The lack of awareness is also prevalent among the law enforcement agencies, especially at the station house and constabulary levels.
4. With the lack of awareness comes the lack of law enforcement. Due to the organised crime nature of trafficking, the law enforcement agencies are also partners and parties in the crime of trafficking. The railways and the transport authorities are among the partners in crime with the traffickers and the police.
5. Trafficking for forced labour is not under the ambit of any legislation in the region.
6. Poor border control and policing leads to increased trafficking. The Indo-Nepal border is an open border and at most places poorly manned. Indo-Bangladesh border is porous at places and not properly manned.
7. There are clear source, transit and destination points for trafficking in persons. The lack of awareness of the problem means that people do not recognise these and these are often understood as systemic migration of adults and children. The notable points are Raxaul, Kishanganj, Siliguri, Malda in India, Bhairwha, Banbasa in Nepal among many others.
8. Trafficking in persons goes together with trafficking of drugs and arms. For example, under the garb of recruitment of Nepalese girls into Indian circuses, not only was there trafficking of children but also trafficking of arms.
9. The social welfare policies and schemes are ineffective and do not percolate down to the beneficiaries. Further, there are no social security measures for the poor and the marginalised.
10. The rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims of trafficking and forced labour are at best insufficient and ineffective. This points towards recycling and re-victimisation of trafficking victims.
11. Endemic illiteracy and lack of proper education mechanisms especially along the border areas fuels trafficking.
12. Insurgency, violence, conflict and instability have also exaggerated the problem of trafficking in persons in the region.

Commitment and Protocols

Countries in South Asia consider human rights to be a 'domestic' matter and are averse to international scrutiny. This, however, is not a uniquely South Asian phenomenon. SAARC has remained doggedly insular.

SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002). The Convention at its best is a weak, inadequate and moralistic Convention.

1. The definition provided in the Convention is very narrow and focuses only on 'prostitution'. It completely ignores the fact that men, women and children are largely trafficked for labour exploitation in forced labour conditions as bonded labourers, domestic labourers, agricultural workers, workers in factories, mines, quarries, etc.
2. Its language includes words such as 'evil' and 'honour of human beings', terms that reflect a moralistic



approach and does not adequately address the issue. It does not treat trafficking as an organised transnational crime recognised by the international community.

3. Does not include all forms and all stages in the process of trafficking in persons.
4. Organised crime nature of trafficking is not recognised.
5. Fails to provide adequate coverage of the rights of the victims, such as the confidentiality of records, the right to privacy, identity protection and access to justice.
6. There is no mention of time-bound nature for prosecution and extradition of trafficker, and rehabilitation and repatriation of the victim.
7. There is no role envisaged for NGOs and other concerned inter-sectoral agencies in victims' sensitive care.

Recommendations

There are some pertinent issues, which have been overlooked in the SAARC Trafficking Convention. The purpose of the SAARC protocol should be in line with the UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons:

- (a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying particular attention to women and children;
- (b) To protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights; and
- (c) To promote cooperation among States Parties in order to meet those objectives.


A. Policy Vacuum

The title of the SAARC Convention should be expanded to cover trafficking not only for the purpose of prostitution but for other purposes such as forced labour, slavery, bondage, organ transplant, forced beggary and forced marriage. Inclusion of all persons as victims, not just women and children, for all forms of exploitation and not just 'prostitution'.

1. Expand the definition of trafficking. Suggested definition at par with the UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons is as follows:
Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
2. Emphasize that the crime of trafficking in persons for the purpose of exploitation is incompatible with the dignity and honour of human beings and is a violation of basic human rights. "Crime" is a more suitable word than "evil" because it connotes the illegality, as well as the immorality, of trafficking, punishable under criminal law.
3. Systematic safe migration policies and effective border control need to be developed to ensure that when people do move it is not for the purpose of exploitation. This needs to be done at the supply end of the trafficking chain by reducing people's vulnerability, and at the demand end by acting vigorously to end exploitative labour practices.

B. Awareness

4. Raise public awareness of trafficking and related issues of security, food, and livelihoods within the region. Promote awareness at large scale, especially along the border areas and identified trafficking routes.

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5. Inherent to the problem of awareness is the need for training and capacity of the law enforcement agencies and personnel as well as the civil society on the issues of trafficking in persons.
 6. Collaboration, cooperation and participation of different and all stakeholders in combating trafficking in persons.

C. Enforcement and Victims' Assistance

Greater enforcement is essential. The Protocol is only a piece of paper unless it is implemented. In some countries, the power of organised crime, corruption and complicity of police stifle enforcement efforts. More resources, both money and personnel, are also needed. Political will is shown by the numbers of resources committed.

7. Establishment of fast track courts, time-bound judicial remedy for prosecution and extradition of the trafficker(s), and rehabilitation and repatriation of the victims of trafficking.
8. To agree to establish specialised law enforcement unit dealing with trafficking in persons, as well as lobby the international community to include the offence of trafficking in persons under the statute of International Criminal Court (ICC).
9. Constituent states to agree to prevent victims from being prosecuted for illegal entry or residence or for the activities they perform as a consequence of their status as trafficked persons, and ensure the protection of victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from re- victimisation.
10. Need for agreement among the constituent states to exchange, on regular basis, information in respect of agencies, institutions and individuals who are involved in trafficking in the region and also identify methods and routes used by the traffickers through land, water and air. The information so furnished shall include information of the offenders, their fingerprints, photographs, DNA, methods of operations, police records and records of conviction, for greater regional coordination and cooperation in combating trafficking in persons.
11. Need to make necessary measures for the supervision of employment and recruitment agencies so as to prevent, control and combat trafficking in persons under the guise of recruitment or provisions of employment, through more binding language in the Convention for greater accountability.

D. Regional Cooperation

12. Regional Task Force on Trafficking in Persons composed of inter-ministerial and inter-agency representatives from the constituent countries as well as individuals (as experts) and civil society organisations active in these fields. The Regional Task Force will not just be a fact-finding body, but will importantly provide recommendations, suggestions and guidelines. Its task will be to monitor and overlook the effective implementation of the Convention. The Regional Task Force should engage as Regional Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons.
13. Establishment of SAARC Fund to Combat Trafficking in Persons dedicated to prevention, awareness generation for elimination of trafficking in persons and victims' assistance in the South Asian region including repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration. The Fund would be a match contribution by the constituent countries and international development aid.
14. Social and economic welfare measures devised and implemented as top priority in the trafficking prone regions. This should be a regional effort and not localised.

A comprehensive approach to trafficking in human beings requires a focus on bringing to justice those responsible for this crime, and on carrying out effective measures to prevent it, while maintaining a humanitarian and compassionate approach in rendering assistance to its victims.



Solidarity Messages

- **Jody Williams, Nobel Laureate**

Ms. Williams would like to thank you for thinking of her for this important event and extends good wishes for the March.

Congratulations on your success building such a strong movement against slavery and trafficking- keep up the great work!

- **Juan Somavia, Director General, ILO**

I wish the event every success in building awareness and stimulating action against child trafficking. We need to work on all fronts to ensure that parents have decent work and children receive the education to which they are entitled. Initiatives such as yours are motors of the changes needed to make a real and positive difference in the lives of millions of child labourers and their parents.

- **Senator Christovam Buarque, Presidential Candidate 2006, Brazil**

Be sure that I will be spiritually present all the way.
Good luck in the march, all the best

- **Minar Pimple, Asia Director, UNDP Millennium Campaign**

Great news and action that makes such campaigns meaningful.

- **Soukunthea Peng, Core Marcher, Global March Against Child Labour**

Dear all marchers, Congratulations for the march success story.
In solidarity, Thea

- **Saurabh Kumar, Ambassador of India, Ireland**

Our congratulations and salutations once again. May your efforts achieve ever greater successes.

- **Ambassador Moushira Khattab, Vice-Chair, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**

Congratulations for such a great work.

- **Assefa Bequele, African Child Policy Forum**

Bravo Bravo Bravo a million thanks.