

PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHOUT BORDERS FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

SECOND ASIA MEET

28-29 AUGUST 2018 | COLOMBO, SRILANKA



GLOBAL MARCH

Against Child Labour
Contra el Trabajo Infantil
Contre le Travail des Enfants

Second Asia Meet of Parliamentarians without Borders for Children's Rights, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 28-29 August 2018

The second Asia meet for Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights (PWB), organised by Global March, was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 28-29 August 2018. The meet witnessed participation of 12 MPs from 7 countries, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Netherlands.



Day 1: Tuesday, 28 August 2018

The meeting commenced with opening remarks by the esteemed participants and guests, which shaped the discourse of the meeting. _

Opening Remarks



At the inauguration, the host of the meeting and the MP from Sri Lanka, Hon. Aravindh K Arunachalem, welcomed all the other participating Parliamentarians and expressed his gratitude for the PWB initiative, which has given him an opportunity to contribute to the welfare of children. In his speech, he also mentioned that Sri Lanka is a country where major factories and sectors do not employ children therefore, one cannot find evidence of rampant child labour and further encouraged the other MPs to learn from the Sri Lankan experience. Nobel

Peace Laureate and founder of the Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights initiative, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi delivered the keynote speech in which he explained the objectives, intentions as well as the sheer importance of the global movement to end child slavery and child labour and the key role that Parliamentarians can play in this endeavour. He further elaborated on some of the milestones achieved by Global March in the past few years. Mr Satyarthi reminisced about how Global March came into existence- a grassroots movement



that inspired several child rights activists, organisations, trade unions, teachers' unions, children and individuals to come together and fight against child labour. Mr Satyarthi further stated that at present, there are around 50 million children on the move, seeking safer places; thus, there is a pressing need to find common solutions to common problems as these cannot

be solved in isolation. He highlighted that MPs represented hundreds and thousands of voters from their constituencies thus they are "the custodians of moral conscience." He remarked that the world cannot be called free even if a single child is enslaved. He further discussed how child related SDGs are still not being prioritized how girls and women are still not deemed equal and global and political will is imperative to address these issues and that's what is needed from the parliamentarians at these pressing hours. He further pointed out the need to involve and fortify the voices of the youth will take the world in a positive direction..



Ms. Simran Singh, Country Director, ILO Sri Lanka, sitting at the panel added that she was delighted to be a part of this meeting and encouraged Parliamentarians to fulfill their role as legislators in the pursuit of promoting and protecting children's rights and informed that ILO



stands in support of any assistance required. Ms. Singh further pointed out that child labour in the supply chains continues to be a challenge. Thus, it is the root causes of child labour that need to be significantly addressed, instead of simply reacting to situations of child labour and focusing largely on symptoms and consequences. She appreciated the presence of women MPs in the meeting and further added that there is a need to facilitate the participation of greater number of women MPs in cabinets as there are still few in number.

First Session: Brief about PWB Initiative, Roundup 2017 & Setting Context for 2018



Mr. Roelof Van Laar, former Member of Parliament from The,- Netherlands, started the first session by welcoming everyone and giving a brief overview of the PWB initiative and the previous PWB meetings held across the world. He set the context and expectations for the 2018 meet, and conveyed the importance of the initiative and the need to relentlessly safeguard the rights of children.

Second Session: Knowing our Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights

The Parliamentarians introduced themselves in this session and shared some insights regarding the situation of child rights in their respective countries, along with steps taken by them for children in their constituencies or countries and any significant outcomes achieved in the past year. Hon. Aravindh Kumar Arunachalem talked about his initiative to provide financial scholarships to multiple students who experienced economic hardships as well as foreign scholarships to around 500 students who have graduated from local universities. He also spoke of expanding the hazardous work list, increasing the years of prison sentence and introducing insurance for children. The MP from Pakistan, Ms. Saba Sadiq shared that during her tenure as the

Chairperson of Child Protection Welfare Bureau in Punjab, Pakistan, she implemented numerous projects to eliminate child domestic labour and trafficking of children in Punjab, Pakistan. She also mentioned about the interventions made in some situations where child labour was reported and about the effectiveness of forming Child Trafficking Committees. The Nepalese MP, Ms. Sarita Neupane shared that in Nepal 10% of the budget was being allocated to children at the state/provincial levels and more than 30,000 children were rescued from bonded labour in a recent anti-child labour drive. Mr. Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary, MP from Nepal informed of a series of consultation meetings that conducted with Bricks factory owners, Brick Factory Association as well as with stakeholders in the Transport, Hotel and Agriculture sectors in which policy and action plans to prohibit child labour in the respective sectors were conceived. The discussions also encapsulated a common problem facing India, Pakistan and Nepal- and the role that CSOs can play in making Parliamentarians accountable and work in partnership with them as well.

Third session: Legislators' Role in Improving Enforcement of Laws and Policies Concerning Child Labour and Trafficking



During the third session, the panelists deliberated upon the prevailing issues concerning children such as of child domestic labour particularly the harassment and torture of girl domestic workers, bonded labour, sexual harassment at workplace, children being exposed to violence and exploitation, child pornography and the impact of child labour on education. It was further discussed and collectively established that relevant laws need to be strictly enforced and implemented in order to address these grave problems.



Major points discussed in this session were as follows:

- The status of child labour in the South Asian countries was discussed. Representatives from each country reported their concerns and findings. The representatives from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan revealed that child labour is a serious concern in their regions. In India, bonded labour also continues to exist in some states.
- A system to register domestic servants and how it can help to guarantee their safety and security.
- Sexual harassment in the workplace is another grave problem which is not vehemently addressed in all the countries.
- The impact of child labour on the education of vulnerable children.
- Trafficking of children was identified as one of the major issues in the South Asian region.
- The Parliamentarians shared their experiences regarding violence against children and discussed whether the prescribed punishments for the perpetrators are sufficient or credible enough.
- The torture faced by many girls under the age of 18 years, who are working as domestic servants such as rape, sexual violence, burning, physical assault and economic exploitation.
- It is extremely crucial that necessary actions be taken by the respective officers and that the identity of the child is protected, especially in case of sexual violence. The physical and mental stability, dignity and safety of the victim (the child) must be guaranteed.
- Eliminating children from working in hazardous conditions is prohibited in many Asian countries, however, representatives from India and Pakistan mentioned that there is still evidence of children being used for dangerous construction work, agricultural work and in the fisheries industry.
- The MPs also highlighted that trafficking of girls for prostitution continues to remain a major challenge in South Asia along with child pornography which is another matter of serious concern that completely violates children's rights. Thus the MPs concluded that the legislature has a primary obligation to enact statutes to prohibit these criminal offences against children.
- The MPs also discussed the growing concern of placement agencies sending underage girls and boys to work in other countries as migrant workers, by preparing illegal and fake documents.

Fourth Session: Legislators' Role in Ensuring Access to Quality Education for both Girls and Boys by Removing Barriers to Education

The fourth session focused on the legislator's role in ensuring access to quality education to all children irrespective of gender, which would further help in eliminating as well as preventing child labour. The Sri Lankan MP, Mr. Arunachalem further stressed that changing mindsets and enforcing policies such as the free education policy



in Sri Lanka, which entails free education from primary to the university level, can foster inclusion and promote equality. The Pakistani MP, Ms. Sadiq shared some of the initiatives of Child Protection and Welfare Bureau, such as implementing capacity building programs through provision of technical education to the abandoned children, in collaboration with



Punjab Vocational Training Centre; upgrading child protection schools for the destitute and neglected children in Punjab; instituting sensitization and awareness programs on child abuse for multiple stakeholders. She further highlighted the need to amend a law in case of a gap between the minimum age for completing compulsory schooling and the minimum age for admission to employment. The Nepalese MPs,

Mr. Chaudhary and Ms. Neupane shared that consistent lobbying has been taking place to make education free and compulsory in government schools by investing in the local level government. They also shared that one of the municipalities, Rapti Sonari Rural Municipality (RSRM) has allocated almost 20% of its total budget to education and has entered a partnership with BASE NGO to implement education programs to increase learning outcomes of children in 54 schools. Issues such as the salary of teachers, provision of educational materials, capacity building of teachers, quality teaching, physical infrastructure of schools are also being prioritised at the local levels. The Indonesian MP, Ms. Maria Endang Astuti shared about the current legislative situation where a Bill on Sexual Violence by Commission 8 (Women, Children, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs) was being reviewed and that she as a woman MP was working tirelessly to ensure the bill is passed in due time so that women and children are protected not only at workplaces but at homes as well.

Major points put forth in this session were as follows:

- Members discussed how high literacy levels of a country contribute to the holistic development of the society, and they put emphasis on the importance of giving equal opportunities to both boys and girls in accessing education.
- Hon. Aravindh Kumar, Sri Lanka, discussed a problem in the existing statutory framework of Sri Lanka. A child is entitled to get compulsory education up to the age of 16 years whereas the minimum age of employment as per the Sri Lankan law is 14 years. Thus, the Sri Lankan Parliament is considering amending the laws in order to address such contradictions.
- The members primarily focused on removing barriers to education while simultaneously highlighting the need to eliminate child labour.
- The Parliamentarians strongly agreed to the need for an increase in the budgetary allocation for education.
- It was pointed out that marriages in Muslim law can affect the education of girls. As per the Muslim law, girls can get married quite early (even if they are below 18 years of age) and therefore, can lose the opportunity to obtain education.

DAY 2: Wednesday, 29th August 2018

Fifth Session: Strengthening Parliamentarians' Role to Promote and Protect Children's Rights through National Caucuses and Committees

The fifth session discussed how the Parliamentarians' role can be consolidated through national caucuses and committees and how they can sensitise and mobilise different stakeholders to commit to work on child rights issues. Representatives of each country discussed the duties and responsibilities of each parliamentarian in this respect. It was further highlighted that since child labour affects the overall development of children, Parliamentarians must bring these relevant issues to the notice of the concerned bodies. The representative from Bangladesh reiterated that caucuses at the Parliamentary level are essential to ensure monitoring and accountability at local levels. He further added that 70% children are involved in agriculture in rural areas which needs to be strongly addressed. The Pakistan representative, Ms. Saba suggested that caucuses need to be implemented at the local level as well. A consensus was brought on the need to create or strengthen the Parliamentary caucuses or the national chapters of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights.

Sixth Session: Way forward on the PWB Initiative: Steps to Achieve the Vision for 2018



The key takeaways from the meeting were collated in the last session and a short video on 20 years of Global March Against Child Labour's work was shown to the participants. A group discussion took place on the consequent steps that need to be taken, following which a 13-point Declaration of Commitment was adopted by the participants.

Some of the key commitments made by the members of Parliament included- strengthening political will to advocate for child rights, prioritising gender sensitive solutions to child rights issues, increasing the budgetary allocations for education and incorporating child rights awareness in the school curriculum, exploring the use of technology for protecting children, working towards eliminating child domestic labour and forming parliamentary caucuses in their respective countries to ensure monitoring and accountability at all levels. Using recommendations of our network

member, Global March also facilitated participation of 2 youth delegates at the meeting to encourage youth interaction with the Members of Parliament. The first youth participant, Ms. Isankhaya Udaani, participated as an observer. Ms. Udaani was working as a probationary lecturer at the Law Faculty of Colombo University who was working on the issues of women rights as well



as violence against children in the plantation sector. The second youth participant, Mr. Sivarathan, who was working on ways of integrating technology with advocacy efforts and interventions for promoting children's rights, made a short presentation on the topic of using technology to promote children's rights. The ideas presented by the youth were appreciated by a few MPs and

they showed interest in working more on such ideas in their respective countries. To strengthen

the relationship between the Members of Parliament and the civil society, Global March also facilitated the participation of 1 civil society member from Pakistan, who has been working with Parliamentarians on children's rights. Ms. Sana Khawaja, from GODH Pakistan (the Pakistani Global March



partner) gave a presentation on what can MP's do to promote children's rights with the help of civil society and how civil society can work closely in partnership with the MPs along with making them accountable for their actions and inaction.



EXPOSURE VISIT

After the culmination of Day 2 sessions, the team visited the Bosco Sevana boys' home, which is located in the town of Bopitiya, in Negambo. Bosco Sevana is an orphanage for boys and young men who were sexually abused. Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr. Kailash Satyarthi addressed the children and called upon the adults to intensify their efforts to ensure the freedom and rights of children everywhere.



Annexure 1:

Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights, Second Asia Meet

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 28-29 August, 2018

2018 Declaration of Commitment

We, the Parliamentarians gathered at the Second Asia Meeting of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights in Colombo, Sri Lanka:

- Recognise Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights as a platform for members of Parliament to engage in advocacy for child rights at the Asia, national and global levels.

- Reaffirm our commitment and recognise the relevance and need to engage Parliamentarians to adopt and promote programs for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, by aiming to:

1. Make efforts to not only prioritise the issues of girls and boys in our constituencies, political parties and parliamentary levels but also find gender sensitive solutions to effectively address them.

2. Advocate for increased budgetary allocations for children and education.

3. Advocate for increase in minimum age of compulsory education to match the minimum age of work in every country.

4. Form and or strengthen forums and parliamentary groups/ caucuses at all levels of government as well inter country parliamentarian group on the issue of children's rights, in particular child labour, child trafficking, education.

5. Induct more committed MPs from within the countries as well as the region into the PWB platform, hold national chapter PWB meets wherever possible.

6. Advocate for a full day of debate on rights of girls and boys in our respective Parliaments or make the Ministry of Child and Women Development the custodian for taking up issues of children in all parliamentary sessions every year.

7. Include child rights awareness in school curriculum on issues of child labour, child trafficking, child sexual abuse.

8. Advocate for a ban on child domestic labour through measures such as ratification of ILO Convention 189, proposing minimum age on entry into domestic work (16-18 years).

9. Explore use of technology for promotion and protection of rights of girls and boys.
10. Commit to work and strengthen relationships with UN Agencies, International Organisations.
11. Publish joint statements on behalf of the Parliamentarians Without Borders Group to show solidarity and raise awareness of child labour, education and trafficking during international days, such as the World Day Against Child Labour (12 June), International Girls Day (11 October), International Literacy Day (8 September), Universal Children's Day (20 November), etc.
12. Secure funding for the PWB platform to further the agenda of protecting children and strengthening political will.
13. Report successes and challenges at upcoming meetings of Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights.

Annexure 2:

List of Participants:

1. Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Global March Against Child Labour



2. Mr. A. Aravindh Kumar, MP, Sri Lanka



3. Ms. Simran Singh, Country Director, ILO Sri Lanka



4. Mr. Roelof Van Laar, Former MP, Netherlands



5. Mr. Dilli Chaudhary, MP, Nepal



6. Ms. Sarita Neupane, MP, Nepal



7. Ms. Saba Sadiq, MP, Pakistan



8. Mr K.C Tyagi, MP, India



9. Mr Israfil Alam, MP, Bangladesh



10. Mr. Shameem Haider Patwary, MP, Bangladesh



11. Ms. Endang Maria Astuti, MP, Indonesia



12. Mr. Faizal Cassim, MP, State Minister of Health, Sri Lanka



13. Dr. Thusitha Wijemanne, MP, Sri Lanka



14. Hon. (Dr.) Kavinda Heshan Jayawardana



Other Participants

1. Deepika Mittal, Global March Against Child Labour
2. Maina Sharma, Global March Against Child Labour
3. T.T Mayuran, CCH Sri Lanka
4. Vimoshana, CCH Sri Lanka
5. Senthuran, CCH Sri Lanka
6. Sivarathan, CCH Sri Lanka
7. Isankhya Uadani, CCH Sri Lanka



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