

Candidates contesting Karnataka Vidhan Sabha elections must include Child Rights in their Manifestos

Submitted by: Makkala Sanghas (Children's Sanghas) of Udupi District, Karnataka

Facilitated by: The Concerned For Working Children

In Kundapur, Byndoor and Udupi talukas of Udupi district, we children have come together to form the Makkala Sanghas (Children's association) with the facilitation of The Concerned for Working Children. These Sanghas are spaces for us to discuss our issues and problems collectively, to learn new things, and get information, demonstrate our skills etc. We also discuss where we can find solutions to our problems. We use our collective strength to raise our issues in the children's gram sabha, with the taluk and district administrations. In fact, we have found solutions for some issues with the support of Panchayat, Taluk and District administration.

But some of the issues we have, can only be addressed at the state level. Assembly elections have been announced in our state of Karnataka. Therefore, we decided that it is important to discuss our issues and concerns with the candidates of our constituency who are standing for elections to form our state government.

So, we, about 150 children from various panchayats, as representatives of our Makkala Sanghas, came together on 18th April, 2023 to discuss and present the following issues before you on behalf of all our children. We hope that all party candidates will include these important issues of children, on priority, in their election manifestos and further plans of actions. We were supported in this process by The Concerned for Working Children¹ at their State Resource Centre, Namma Bhoomi, Udupi District.

Demands to address the problems of school-going children:

- Education is our Right. We, and all children, must be given all support necessary to access our right.
- Even though the education given to us in government schools is supposed to be completely free, some schools are charging us fees. All such charges must be completely stopped.
- Cycles used to be issued to all std. 8th children onwards in government schools. However, this has been stopped. This is causing problems for those of us coming from areas without proper transport facilities. So, all those of us entitled to receive cycles, must be given the same immediately.
- All government schools have to give free text and note books, uniforms and school scholarships. However, these entitlements are delayed, being given to us only months after the start of our school; in fact, many of us have received the scholarships only at the end of our school year. This makes learning very difficult for us. These entitlements should be given to us at the beginning of the school year.
- We must have clean drinking water provisions in all our government schools.
- Use and sale of narcotic drugs and should be banned near all government schools.
- We should have access to adequate sports equipment in all of our schools. Necessary grants should be given to schools so that those of us who can, participate in the next level of competition in the field of sports.

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- All of our government schools must have compounds for free play, playgrounds for sports and theatres for cultural events.
- Computer systems must be provided to all of our schools and we should have access to free and relevant computer education.
- Our schools should have well-equipped science laboratories. This makes learning science interesting and practical.
- Necessary first aid systems should be provided in all of our schools. Appropriate information workshops should be held so that we know how to administer first aid to ourselves and to others who are in need.
- During health screening undertaken in schools, not only height and weight measurement, but all nutritional levels of children should be checked and nutritional supplements should be given to those amongst us who are malnourished. Along with routine health check-ups, all children, including us, should be provided with the necessary mental health counselling
- Several of our schools have a shortage of teachers, which severely compromises our learning ability. This shortage of teachers in schools should be overcome.
- It should be ensured that there is no shortage of nutritious mid-day meals including milk and eggs provided in our schools. It should be implemented from primary to high school.
- Some of our schools are charging a fee to provide transportation support, which is creating a financial burden on many of us. Since education is our right, access to education, including transportation access must be provided to us. Vehicle arrangements should be made for children coming from far away or travel expenses should be provided to facilitate their travel.
- Arrangements should be made by the government for graduate and post graduate education for those who need it.

Demands to address the problems of non school-going children of the panchayats:

- Children, including some of us, who are not interested in schooling or who have dropped out of school, should be given access to trainings and learning opportunities that are appropriate and in which we see value.
- Some of us have dropped out of school to support our families, but would like to resume our education with appropriate support. Some of us are combining work with our schooling. For all of us, opportunities should be given to continue learning along with earning.
- Children who drop out of school for various reasons and work in non-hazardous sectors should be provided with proper wages and all appropriate facilities.



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Demands to address the problems of all children of the panchayats:

- Anganwadi and ASHA workers should make house visits once a month in all our panchayats and undertake general health check-ups there itself.
 - Primary health centres or health sub-centres should be established in Gram Panchayats where there are no primary health centres. This will help us and our families access treatment faster and in closer proximity, rather than going to a taluk hospital or a distant hospital.
 - Adolescents should be given iron tablets, deworming pills and ``clean'' sanitary pads for girls. Regular health related information workshops should be organised and relevant information must be shared with us.
 - There is lack of cleanliness in government hospitals that we go to. Cleanliness should be maintained and nutritious food should also be given to patients in government hospitals.
 - The digital library system should be introduced in all of our schools and Gram Panchayats. There should be books and newspapers suitable for children's reading. In addition, these libraries should be provided with all the necessary materials and facilities to make them places for us to access dynamic and creative learning.
 - Education and all other arrangements for special needs children should be made at the earliest.
 - Feeding of children, pregnant women and lactating mothers in Anganwadi has been stopped and should be restarted. Otherwise, there will be a problem of lack of nutrition for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children of our communities.
 - Necessary basic facilities like housing, drinking water, toilets, electricity, education etc. should be provided to the migrant community, who have since many years, been living in different areas of Udupi district.
 - We need internet for online education and many villages in our Udupi district do not have proper facilities. This makes it difficult to access online education and other online services. So, network facility should be provided to all the areas with network problems.
 - In different circles / junctions of the national highway vehicle comes from four sides so that it is very difficult for us, and other children and old people to cross the road. The situation has to be monitored and necessary safety measures should be taken.
 - Many families in the state, including many of our own families, still do not have basic facilities like water supply, electricity and nutritious food. We should be provided with all the basic facilities.
 - Protection of children, women and the elderly should be prioritised in all places in our panchayats.
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