

# **Working Children's Report, 1998**

**By**

**Working Children of India  
Submitted to UNCRC**



**The Concerned for working children**

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## The actors

The process was carried out on the basic premise of child partnership. The primary constituency for this exercise consisted of groups of working children who have reached a certain level of participation, some of whom have represented their children's unions or fora. These groups came from five states of the country, namely Maharashtra, Orissa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Delhi.

The secondary constituency consisted of NGO activists who believe in the potential of children and work closely with them. These activists were from Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (*YUVA*) (working with street and working children in Mumbai), *Butterflies* (working with street and working children in Delhi), *Agramee* (working with the tribal communities in the hills of Kasipur in Rayagada District of Orissa), *Malarchi Trust*, Child Labour Actions Research Project, Kovilpatti (*CLARP*), a unit of CEDAR (working with child workers in the match factories in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu and their communities), and *Ankur* and *Gramashrama* (field programmes of CWC, working with the issue of child labour in urban and rural Karnataka, respectively).

The two working children's unions involved in the process were *Bhima Sangha* (a union of, by and for working children in Karnataka) and *Bal Mazdoor Union* (BMU) (a union of child workers in Delhi). However, during the fourth phase of the report formulation, Butterflies (the NGO that facilitates the Bal Mazdoor Union) wrote and expressed their disagreement to be a party to this report.<sup>1</sup>

The Centre for Applied Research and Documentation (CARD) of CWC was responsible for the overall support and coordination of the exercise.

## Framework

The process took place in four stages:

### **(1) Identification of children's problems**

Each individual child's problem was identified and understood in depth. For example, if a child stated that he/she had a problem related to schooling, the group tried to find out the specific nature of the problem. Were the fees a burden or were the timings inconvenient? Was the school located far away or was the curriculum irrelevant?

Children felt that, most often, their problems were generalised, and hence the interventions failed to address them. They stated that an accurate analysis of the problem was necessary as each specific problem warranted specific interventions.

### **(2) Identification of the impact of the problem on the**

- child
- child's family
- child's community/group.

This exercise was useful to understand each problem and to identify all those affected by it. Many interesting examples were cited to highlight how a particular problem not only affected a child in a certain manner, but also affected his/her family as well as the community at large. This further helped the children to understand how, very often, their own families and communities are also victims of social injustice.

### **(3) Identification of what needs to be done**

As actors, several agencies were identified. The questions were:

- (a) What needs to be done by working children themselves?
- (b) What needs to be done by their families?
- (c) What needs to be done by their communities?
- (d) What needs to be done by the agencies that work with these children/communities?
- (e) What needs to be done by the Government – local, state and central?

The above distinction was important because children identified problems that could be addressed by the various actors mentioned above – either individually or in partnership. Children also identified problems that they could collectively address. For example, in situations where children of certain castes<sup>2</sup> were bullied at work, they felt that other children, who did not approve of it, could protest and stop the bullying.

**(4) *Children's response to the Government of India's (GOI) Report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1997***

The steps followed by the children in this process were:

- (a) Understanding the content of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- (b) Understanding the content of the GOI Report submitted to the Committee.
- (c) Responding to the GOI Report.

## **PROCESS**

This report cannot be seen as an isolated activity. Past experience has re-affirmed our belief that children can achieve remarkable results through empowerment. Empowerment is a dynamic process, which constantly needs to be evaluated and enhanced.

It is a process that needs to be shared with other activists who believe in the potential of children. When working children and activists from the six participating organisations first met, they felt that the process of the 'Working Children's Report' was an empowering one and that it should not limit itself only to respond to the implementation of the CRC.

Each of these groups identified core groups within their programmes/unions to take up the role of researchers in order to collect the required information. After detailed discussions, they decided that the older (and more experienced) children should be advisors to the core group and not be involved in the actual research as they may dominate the process. They also decided that the core group should comprise children in the age group of 10–12 years, and the support group should comprise children between 14 and 18 years.

Children listed down the qualities and skills that had to be present within each core group. The core group was primarily responsible for the collection of data from the children and for dissemination of information received during the course of meetings with the other core groups. Thus each organisation had one core group, one support group and one/two activists who acted as facilitators. Since the primary actors were children, the role of the adult facilitators was to provide protection, conduct training and act as contact points for communication.

One of the responsibilities of the NGOs was to introduce children to a wide range of information-gathering methodologies, so that they could select research techniques and activities that were both reliable and enjoyable. In response to the requests from the Bangalore and Madurai teams, two workshops on Participatory Research Appraisal (PRA) techniques were organised by CWC as part of this process. This highlighted the use of tools such as role plays, street plays, posters, folk dances, music, puppetry, etc.

The groups also listed other resources and inputs that were needed in order to take this work forward. For instance, members of Malarchi and Agrabamee wanted more information about working with working children as they had recently begun their work with them. Some child and adult participants required inputs regarding the concept of child participation and partnership. The coordinating team made these available to them. YUVA (Mumbai) hosted one of the meetings during which the process was facilitated collectively.

Throughout the process, the experiences and opinions of each team were sensitively acknowledged and responded to. As some of the participating teams had opportunities to meet during the Regional Consultation of Working Children at Bangalore (South India) in April 1996, they were able to discuss in depth many of the issues that had been raised in the meetings of the Working Children's Report.

## Methodology

After the initial discussion during which the groups decided upon the methodology to work on this report, they went back to their respective areas and began to gather information. During this period they were in touch with each other, exchanging information about the progress made, seeking help and guidance if necessary, and sharing success stories. PRA workshops and NGO visits were also conducted.

After the groups were ready with the required data, a common meeting was organised to share the information. At this meeting, each of the groups presented the information they had collected in the form of drafts of written reports, role-plays, songs, charts, posters, etc. They not only presented their findings but also discussed the methods that were used to collect the data. These methods included mapping exercises, interviews, theatre, posters, drawings, group discussions, story telling and case study documentation. They were pictorially presented, which documented the different methods used by children to collect/generate information and indicated how successful each of these methods were.

A 'tree' exercise was conducted to enable children to understand the systemic issues leading to their problems. This facilitated the analysis of their situation within a larger perspective. In this exercise, children classified their problems into three groups. The first group consisted of micro problems, depicted as the leaves; the second group consisted of problems related to issues, depicted as the trunk; and the third group consisted of basic problems, depicted as the roots.

When the different trees were compared, children recognised that while some of the problems grouped as 'leaves' were situation-specific, the problems grouped as 'roots' were very similar across the groups (see the section on 'problems'). Through this process, they were sensitised to a wide range of issues – both micro and macro. The insight provided by this exercise was apparent when children responded to the GOI Report and when they listed down the solutions to their problems (see the section 'what needs to be done' and 'children's response to the GOI Report').

## Group dynamics

Children interacted among themselves very easily, in spite of their different life experiences. They found innovative ways to communicate with each other in order to overcome language barriers. They sincerely tried to understand and appreciate the differences that existed between their situations, at the same time acknowledging the fact that as working children in India, they had many common problems.

**Group 1:** "In our villages, people from certain castes are not allowed to fetch water directly from the wells located within the village. We have to wait until an upper caste person comes along and hope that he/she has the time to pour out some water for us."

**Group 2:** "How humiliating! We will come to your village. Let us get together and break down that well."

**Group 1:** "How will that help? We will only have to walk four more kilometers to the next well. Let us find some other solution."

Children were very supportive of each other. Their expression of solidarity created an open, supportive atmosphere. Because of this, they were able to talk about some of their personal problems – problems rarely shared in groups where both boys and girls are present. For instance, when one of the participating teams was reluctant to talk about problems related to sexual abuse, another participant said: "Come on

friend. Please talk about your problems. If we cannot talk about these issues in a group such as this, how will we grow strong as a group to counter those problems?" Such expressions of solidarity were voiced in many different ways throughout the process.

Solutions were also offered to problems that could be handled at the village level itself.

**Group 3:** "In our village, there is a well right outside the school. Its wall has been broken for many months now and we are worried about children falling into it."

**Group 4:** "Have you done nothing about it? You must immediately mend the wall so that no accidents take place. You can't keep waiting for the Government to take action all the time."

As children were talking about their own experiences and responding to the process from within their own framework, they were confident and vocal. Even children from the forests of Orissa, who were new to the concept of electricity, spoke boldly into the microphone without feeling self-conscious.

Children were able to learn from each other's problems – representing life experiences from the country's capital city to interior tribal villages. The deprivations and exploitations they experienced encompassed a wide range of issues. Adult facilitators took a back seat, translating, giving inputs when required, and learning from the children.

## **Challenges faced**

The facilitators had certain challenges. The most striking one was that the teams of working children who took part in the processes were at different levels of participation. While some teams had participated in similar processes earlier, there were children who had come out of their homes for the very first time. It was a challenge to create an atmosphere where the entire range of their experiences was respected and, at the same time, each team was enabled to move to a higher level of participation. In this context, input sessions on the CRC and the GOI Report were especially challenging.

Accompanying adults had to take up the role of translating for children, which meant that activists needed to be able to speak English. This placed certain constraints. In most organisations the activists who worked very closely with children were fluent with the local language, but not with English. It was also difficult for those who worked closely with children to play the role of objective translators. On the other hand, when the translator was a person who had not worked with children, the children found it hard to comprehend the translations because they were often not context-sensitive.

Some of the teams could not keep up with their deadlines because of communal violence in one of the areas, heavy flooding due to rainfall in another, etc. This created some restlessness among the other groups who had already completed their tasks and wanted to move ahead.

When the Working Children's Report was initiated, the submission of the GOI Report was already overdue. It had been anticipated that after children complete their work on the first three stages, they could review the GOI Report. The GOI submitted its report in February 1997. The final meeting of the Working Children's Report was held in May 1998. This expanded time frame affected the continuity of the process to some extent. The composition of the core group of children did change in most teams. However, in the final analysis, the new participants enhanced the report with their inputs as they took on the responsibility of completing a process that their partners had begun in 1995.

## **Lessons learnt**

All the working children who participated in this process expressed tremendous solidarity with each other. They challenge us – the adults – with their critique of the world. They inspire us with their dreams. They have stated, in no uncertain terms, that they will walk hand in hand with us to create the village/city of their dreams.

“The preparation of this report is seen only as one of the milestones in the long road towards that level of child empowerment which will enable them to be equal partners in the development of the society; and to that level of adult empowerment which will enable us to be worthy partners to children.”<sup>3</sup>

# The Working Children's Report

## Problems faced by us (the working children)

In the following sections, issues identified by children have been translated and reproduced in the formats selected by the teams for their presentations. The participants in accordance with the decision take this that while all the inputs from children will be compiled together, their individuality will not be tampered with.

### **Problems identified by Bal Mazdoor Sangh (a union of working children), Delhi**

*Methodology followed by the Bal Mazdoor Sangh:* In the first phase of the research, we talked to approximately 80–90 children in different areas and collected data. This was recorded on tape and/or paper.

1. In each place/area, small groups of children stated why this research was necessary.
2. On 20 September 1995, a group of more than 50 children discussed in detail the necessity of this report:
  - we think more about our own lives as to why our life is like this. What is the reason for it?
  - we will give the report to the Government, to the police and to the Press.
  - we will put together both our report and that of the Government and send it to all the people and organisations who are working with children, both within and outside the country.
  - we will join other children and prepare a big report and give it in our place.

Again we asked ourselves: “What will happen if we do this? Probably the Government, police and employers (owners) will think seriously about us. If we do something like this our troubles will become much less. Probably we will realise our childhood rights.”

All the children said: “Come, let us begin. We have prepared four reports in this very hall. This is our fifth report.”

The following is an account of the reports:

*First Report:* On the situation of girl children.

*Second Report:* On the Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to important issues like education, life, protection, etc.

*Third Report:* We asked school-going children to give their opinion about other children (i.e. those not attending school) through letters, forms, questionnaires, etc.

*Fourth Report:* About the health of children like us.

And finally, the present report is the *Fifth Report*. Nineteen children enrolled their names to do it. Five of them went out of Delhi city and left the team. One new member joined us. Thus, a group of 15 children produced this report.

3. How did we do this?

We said that:

1. We will discuss in groups and record it.
2. Each child will speak on two different issues:
  - through case studies
  - through drawing
  - through drama.
4. What issues did we discuss?

There are many problems – rowdyism/beating up, sickness, drugs, police, reading and writing, playing/recreation, shelter (sleeping), work. These were the issues that came up during the discussion. We decided to select the following three to compile information:

1. Police

2. Reading and writing (education)

3. Playing/recreation.

Finally, we discuss 'What we have lost?' and 'What we have gained?'

5. We had a two-day training programme. In this we learned how to gather information, how to participate in discussions, how to analyse the gathered information, how to find solutions, and how to conduct discussions without getting bored by incorporating anecdotes, stories and songs. We presented all these through a play. We went in different groups and did this exercise with children engaged as shoe polishers, coolies, dhaba workers, porters and those doing small businesses. Discussions took place in many sittings and were on different issues. In total we had discussions with more than 200 children, and individually spoke to 40 children. They made drawings of these problems and presented plays.

The *questions* posed were:

- How do we feel about the police?
- What relationship do we have with the police?
- When taken to the Delhi gate (children's jail), what do they do?
- When the police beat us up, what do the people around do? Whose side do the people take?
- If we are working in shops and quarrel with the employer (owner), what do the police and the people around do?
- Mention examples of incidents/encounters with the police.
- In this situation what should the Government, the people and we do?

All the *answers* were similar:

- Policemen are useless, cruel ('harami'). They are like dogs. They always beat us. They take money from thieves and they call us thieves; when they beat us nobody rescues us, all take the side of the police. We are poor, but are we not human beings? Employers (owners) also beat us and they don't pay us.
- If I can I will shoot the police, leave them in a forest so that the tiger will eat them up and the elephant will smash them up, etc.

## 2. Education

The *questions* posed were:

- Why is education important?
- Why did we not study? Why did those who did go to school leave? What can the Government and the people do so that all of us can study?
- How is the school? There are two types of school; is it right?

The following were the *answers*:

- All agreed that education is necessary. We can become 'somebody' – police, lawyers, doctors, or something else.
- But our house and family situation make it inevitable that we work; need for money makes work necessary; that is why some of us never went to school, others left school in between and came to the street; those who were at home had to continue working and so they can't study.
- Those who left home said: "We want such a school where we can stay and study and learn some work (skill). With that we can make a living."
- Those at home and who work said: "Our parents' income should increase. If we have more money at home our parents will send us to school, and we will not have the need to run away from home."

## 3. Playing/recreation

The *questions* were:

- Do we get time for playing/recreation?
- If we get time to play, can we play in the playgrounds or parks?
- What do we do for recreation?
- What assurances do we have from other people?

The *answers* were:

- None of us get time to play.
- If we make the time to play, either the gardener or the watchman do not permit us to enter the park/playground when they see our dirty clothes. Our poverty is our sickness and therefore nobody accepts us as children.
- If we play on the road, people ask us: “Why can’t you go to the playground?” If we go there, the gardener or watchman chases us away. We do not have money to buy sports articles. We are working for 18 hours.
- For recreation, we watch films. We go to the Yamuna River and have a bath and a swim. The Yamuna water too is dirty, and we get allergies. We play ‘B.D.O.’ game. We hide others’ things and do some fighting and play hide-and-seek.
- Finally, we shared our experiences about life on the streets. We discussed what we have lost and what we have gained after coming to live on the streets (see Table 1). Thinking about what we have lost by coming to the streets made us cry. Thoughts about our families and houses refreshed our minds.

**Table 1**

Losses	Gains
Parents’ affection and love; comforts of the house and family	Police lathi, people’s beatings and scolding
Enjoyment of celebrating festivals and playing/recreation	Beatings in children’s jail
Good, stomach-filling meals	People’s disrespect as they brand us as thieves/pickpockets
No medicines and treatment from parents when we fall sick	Freedom to have a good time
Protection	Bad habits, cigarette smoking, gambling, alcohol, lottery, watching films
Missing friends and relatives in the village	Interaction with bad people
Missing bed, bedsheet and house when it is extremely cold	Beatings from employers (owners)
Good future and education	Work for 14/16/18 hours
Happiness, comfort and leisure	We have had only sorrows; the sorrows of sleep, shelter, work, friends, speaking with
Our entire life	Yes, there is light in the darkness, i.e. we have sisters and
brothers; they are our helping us	friends, family, relatives; always they are with us and
Our dignity	
If we had studied we would have become something, now we have lost our dream of life	
Our father, mother, brother, sister, family, house and everything else; losing all these we have lost our fate. Often we go to sleep hungry. Sometimes we take food from the temple. Already we have lost our families, we are also losing our earnings	

All this sharing made us sad; those who read (see) this should join us in our struggle and do something for us.

### Challenges that came up in the research

- After the training, we got stuck many times. When we had trouble in going ahead, our brother (the NGO activist) gave us courage and taught us how to go about it. Then, we moved on.
- In many places children find it difficult to speak against the police, especially in Connaught Place. These children had agreed to pay 25% of their earnings to the police. They are still working there. After meeting them many times, they told us a few things (about police atrocities).
- In-group discussions there were many difficulties; some children kept moving out of the meeting. We used these breaks to tell stories and sing songs. The activist conducted group games to regain their attention and we would then resume the discussions.
- All children did not have the time to spare for this. Owners did not permit them to come. Many a time the activist went and spoke to the owner so that they got some time.
- There was no problem discussing issues with children individually; the only problem was getting free time.

- In places like New Delhi railway station, it was difficult to sit and speak. When some friends gathered together, the police beat them up. Once when we were discussing we were all caught and beaten; when the activist came to get us released, the police beat him too and put him in lock-up the whole night. On the second day we were released.

### **Concern of the children**

“If we send this report from our place, what will you do? How will you carry out your research? Nobody sends us any information. We wrote letters as well in this regard. But nobody sent us anything. So we felt bad. This should not happen.”

## **Problem tree from Delhi**

### ***Leaves***

- Our dreams are empty.
- We have no time to play.
- Why are the police there?
- Lack of love from parents.
- Children are courageous, but they get suppressed.
- Police and employers are hand-in-glove friends.
- Children do not have homes.

### ***Trunk***

- Problems due to friends.
- Children are not given respect.
- Police blindly exploit us.
- No education.
- We do not have the love of parents.

### ***Root***

- We are pushed out of our homes.

## **Problems identified by working children from Tamil Nadu**

We work in the match factories in the Sivakasi and Kovilpatti belt of Tamil Nadu. Our working hours are from 5a.m. till 9p.m. We have no time to rest or play.

We have listed down the problems faced by us. Some are problems faced by individual children and some are problems faced by many of us:

- We lack love, care and attention from parents.
- We do not have time for relaxation and recreation.

*“I love to go home and spend some time playing with my younger brother. But when my mother sees me with him she shouts, ‘Go and make the matches. How will we survive otherwise?’”*

*– Pechiamma*

- We work without a break at home and at factories.
- We work under extremely hazardous conditions for long hours.
- We have to walk very long distances.
- We suffer from ill-health.
- There is much political interference.
- Our lands are arid and dry.
- There is acute water scarcity in our village.
- Bribery and cheating are rampant in our area.
- Our area is economically backward.
- We have very little knowledge about political situations.
- We are physically abused at home and in the factory.
- We have no opportunities to get educated though we all want to go to school.

- Even if we are provided with an opportunity, we still cannot have access to education as we are asked to pay heavy bribes by the teachers in school.

## **Problem tree from Tamil Nadu**

### ***Leaves***

- Our aspirations are not fulfilled.
- We are unable to write.
- We get very low wages.
- We suffer from diseases.
- Hospitals are not adequate.
- We have to move from one place to another.
- We have water problems.
- We have shortage of food.
- There is unemployment.
- Children are sent to work.
- We lack basic necessities.
- There is wastage of money.
- Bonded labour has increased and self-respect has decreased.
- We are unable to assert our rights.
- There are riots, death and loss of property.
- We do not have sufficient food.
- We are unable to go to school.
- We are unable to play.
- Medical expenses in each family are high.

### ***Trunk***

- We are unable to find a good leader.
- Behaviour is worsening.
- There is an increase in the number of patients.
- People are suffering.
- There is severe unemployment.
- Lack of political awareness among the people.

### ***Roots***

- Degradation in culture.
- Ill health and unsanitary conditions.
- Discrimination between the rich and poor.
- Increase in corruption.
- Scanty rainfall and arid lands.
- Caste discrimination.
- No unity among people.
- Adult unemployment.
- Increased poverty.

*“Can I go to school since our Government has ratified the CRC?”*

*– Pechiamma, 12 years, working in the match factories of  
Kuruvi Kulam in the Sivakasi belt*

## **Problems identified by working children from Mumbai**

- Police officials harass street children on the streets.
- Street children are denied medical attention in hospitals because of their dirty appearance and torn clothes.

(This team put up a play presenting the situation of children in the streets that get involved in drugs and finally find a home in the shelter)

- Very often, poverty or cruel treatment meted out to children by stepparents force them to leave home. When they come to the big cities, they steal or take to drugs. While on the streets, they usually stay:
  - at the railway station,
  - on the footpath,
  - under bridges, as there are less chances of confrontation with the police and the public, or
  - near temples, because the rich come there to worship and usually give food.
- When children find a shelter or a home where they feel secure, they give up drugs, smoking, etc.
- Children search the garbage for food. Sometimes they sit outside big hotels and temples which the rich frequent and get food or eat the leftovers.
- There are over 40,000 street children in the city of Mumbai. They are prone to several diseases, a few of which are listed below:
  - Malaria* – because they live under bridges, in unhealthy environments.
  - General weakness* – because they have no regular food and what they eat has no nutritional value.
  - Diarrhoea* – because they eat food cooked in unhygienic conditions.
  - Scabies* – because of the unhealthy environment.
  - Tuberculosis* – because of the pollution in their working environment.
- Children on the street work as coolies, collectors of garbage and shoeshine boys. Some of them sell candies, while others collect empty water cans, fill them with water and sell them for Rs5. Most of the money they earn is taken away by the police.
- During police raids, children are beaten and locked up in police stations, where they are harassed. Some children are put in remand homes until they are 18 years of age. However, many children run away from these homes.
- Children between the age of five and eight years are killed and buried beneath bridges that are being constructed. This gory act is done by the contractors themselves, and is often attributed to the belief that killing a child and burying him/her at the spot where a bridge is being built makes it strong.

(All this information comes from the personal experiences of children and has been collected through drama and the use of charts)

“There are, however, some very painful experiences from the past that continue to haunt us. They cannot be shared, here and now. How can we talk about that in this group? With all the girls present? It is not possible.”

- Children take to drugs when they realise that their dreams are not coming true. Visions of a nice home, love, concern and good food seem to be far away.
- Children on the street are always exposed to danger. They do not have a long life span. They succumb to drugs, disease, police harassment, murder, abuse and, sometimes, suicide. Because they live very exposed lives, they are vulnerable to the influences of the drug lords and the mafia. Many a time, this vulnerability is also due to peer pressure.

### **Excerpts from group discussions with children living on the pavements in Mumbai, Maharashtra**

Children living on the pavements or sidewalks are homeless children. They live with their families in homes made of plastic sheet, gunnysack, tarpaulin or cardboard sheets held together by ropes and stones. They constantly live under the threat of being evicted and rendered completely homeless. The sight of bulldozers, policemen and other officials pulling down their homes is often traumatic for the children.

“My mother faces the hardest problem during an eviction. They evict us from our houses to broaden and clean the roads because they say we keep them dirty.”

“Sometimes people living in buildings near our houses complain, then the police come and destroy our homes.”

“I feel like crying whenever the eviction squad arrives.”

“At times of eviction, we children help to save our things. I tried to save my school bag... .”

“We clean the space in front of our house and play. But I get scared when my little brother goes out to play on the road because of the possibility of an accident.”

“I love playing cricket. When vehicles pass by I cannot play.”

“I get scared when my father drinks and comes home. He beats me and my mother.”

“I get angry when my father drinks and beats my mother.”

“I do all the work at home. I look after my younger brothers and sisters, fill water, clean the house. That is why I cannot go to school. My brother does not do any work.”

– a young girl of 12 years

“I have to get up at 5 in the morning to fill water.”

“There is no electricity in my house.”

“My house has no windows.”

“The front of my house is very dirty and crowded. There is a garbage bin. Vehicles pass by on the road. There is also a gutter. People in the nearby buildings put their garbage in the bin near my house.”

“I get scared of the policeman because he has a gun.”

“I would love to have a ‘pucca’ house (made of bricks and cement) rather than a temporary one of plastic and tarpaulin.”

“I would love to have a house that is clean.”

“Most of us have water taps in our house but some of us have to fetch water from the community tap. Only girls fill water from there.”

“In front of my house there is a dirty sewage line. The stench is always present and sometimes it is too much. What I like most is to live in clean surroundings.”

“The Municipality has to be forced to clear the garbage.”

## **Problem tree from Mumbai**

### ***Leaves***

- People look at us with hatred.
- People do not respect us.
- People think of us as thieves.
- We have no protection.
- We get beaten.
- The employer does not give us money.
- We do not get food.

### ***Trunk***

- The police beat us and accuse us.
- We fall ill.
- We do not get the love and affection of parents.
- We get bullied.

## **Problems identified by members of Bhima Sangha, Bangalore**

The children involved in this process were working in agarbathi (incense sticks) rolling, hotels, construction work and rag-picking.

**Method of information collection:** Drawing, mapping, discussion, small group discussions, games, story telling and recording.

- We have been forced to migrate to cities.
- We have no access to education.
- We are harassed by the police.
- We cannot afford to buy uniforms.
- We have no sense of security.

- We do not receive the love and affection of our parents. We are left to fend for ourselves.
- We have many problems at home.
- Food is scarce.
- People say we are a burden on them.
- Some of us get married very young.
- The problems in the agarbathi (incense making) sector are many. There is too much work and too little pay. We have health problems. Our fingers hurt and the back aches because we are constantly bending over. In one hour, we make 1000 sticks. Our eyes burn, we have severe cough. Since the PVC (chemical compound) is applied with bare fingers, our fingers swell.
- In our area, Muslim parents do not send girls out to work. They are made to work at home. Their desire to learn is curbed by financial problems at home.

### **Additional list prepared by children who work as rag pickers and in hotels in Bangalore city**

- We work very hard and get paid very little.
- The owner at the work place harasses us.
- We are harassed by the broker/middleman.
- We have financial problems.
- We are afraid to speak up for ourselves.
- We do not have confidence in ourselves.
- We do not have good entertainment.
- We do not have any rest and relaxation.
- We have very few friends.
- We do not have anybody to care for us.
- We do not have any information on the laws of our land.
- We are not skilled in any area of work.
- We do not have any opportunities, and we do not have any other option but to work or else we will starve.
- The physical strain experienced at work is enormous.
- We have very little exposure to the outside world.
- We have long hours of work.
- We have no time to play.
- We are harassed by the local goondas (thugs) who take away our hard-earned money.
- We lack even basic facilities, e.g. we do not get water.
- Cleanliness is totally absent in the work place and this causes a lot of health problems.
- Street children (girls) have no protection.

Children rated their problems on the basis of how they prioritised them, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

<b>Extremely important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>
Survival	Protection	Security
Health	Right to education	Having a name
Overall development	Right to vote	Nationality
No exploitation	Right to expression of opinion	Religion
Right to have leisure/recreation	Right to stop migration	
Right to protect one's honour	Right to unionisation	

### **Problem tree from Bangalore**

#### ***Leaves***

- Our parents find it difficult to buy us books.
- We have no place to play.

- We get beaten at school.
- We frequently have pain in the chest and eyes because of our work in the agarbathi factory.
- We get beaten in the factory, we get low wages.
- We do not have nutritious food.
- We do not have toilets.
- There is a drainage problem, there is no cleanliness. Roads stink.
- Roads are not adequate.
- There are no street lights.
- There is no clean drinking water.
- The police harass street and working children.

### ***Trunk***

- Working children are exploited and abused.
- There is no protection for working children.
- The number of children on the streets is increasing.
- Their wages are not in keeping with their labour.
- Children suffer because of over work.
- Children do not have good health.
- Adults do not get suitable jobs.

### ***Roots***

- Poverty.
- Migration.
- Unemployment.
- Society does not respect children.
- Society does not recognise the disabled as equals.
- The education system is faulty.

### ***Our demand***

- We need protection.
- We need opportunities to voice our opinions openly and express our needs freely.
- We want to vote.
- We want the right to have a nationality.
- We want freedom of religion.
- We want the right to a name.
- We want the right to overall development.
- We want the right to protection from exploitation.
- We want the right to protest against injustice.
- We want the right to rest, relaxation and entertainment.
- We want the right to come together and form a union/sangha.
- We want the right to health.
- We want the right to live.
- We want the right to home/shelter.
- We want girls to be protected from abuse on the street and at home.
- We want children below the age of 15 years to be prevented from migrating to the cities to work.

### **Problems identified by working children from Orissa**

“We are members of the Children’s Forum which is set up to discuss our aspirations, desires and opinions. In our tribal community, a unique concept ‘grain bank’ has been introduced. We children jointly make our contributions to the ‘grain bank’. So when the monsoon comes and food is scarce, we do not have to go without food.”

– Shanty and Bandu, Kasipur

- We have no food during some seasons.
- When food is scarce we may have to eat only roots.
- We have to work hard, but that is not difficult.
- We are scared of wild animals.
- Our parents work very hard.
- Life becomes very difficult during the rainy season.
- We do not have access to hospitals.  
“We do not have that (pointing to the fluorescent lamp). We could use that to scare away wild animals in the night.”

– Bandu, Kasipur

### **Problems presented by members of Bhima Sangha from South Kanara**

For the core group of the Working Children’s Report, we elected children representing three different regions: the coastal region, the ghat (hilly) region and the plains. This exercise helped us come closer. We worked every day in the evenings to prepare this.

The methods used were mapping exercises, group discussions, interviews and theatre.

The problems faced by children are related to:

- Water
- Fuel and firewood
- Toilet
- Education
- Family
- Alcohol
- Others.

#### ***Water***

“The water in this area is very salty. Food does not cook well and also gets stale very quickly. So water has to be brought in from very long distances. This tires us. It usually leaves us with very little time for anything else. People who own wells and live near them are not willing to spare even a drop of water.”

“We did resource mapping in Satwadi village. Here, children walk a distance of 1km to fetch water. Water is available in the wells that are owned by the Shettys – wealthy people. They are very rude to us. Children from lower castes are not permitted to touch the well.”

“We have to walk long distances to fetch water and later help with the household work. Many of us are even forced to leave school to fetch water. People get into fights many a time because there is acute water shortage.”

#### ***Fuel and firewood***

“We are usually sent to fetch firewood from the forests. We also have to take care of the younger children at home. To fetch firewood we walk a distance of 20–25km everyday. We leave home at 5a.m. and this disturbs our sleep. We manage to reach the forest only at 12 noon after walking through rocky and rough terrain. As a result, our legs hurt, and the thorns make our hands bleed. Small stones hurt our feet. We are afraid of the animals in the forest like snakes and wolves.”

“Forest officials shout at us and take away our knives. We feel very bad, because if we return home without any firewood we have to face the anger of our parents.”

#### ***Toilet***

“These are located far away from our houses. We usually use the groves and the forests as toilets. Women have to wait until dark to defecate. They avoid going to the open places alone and go in groups.”

#### ***Education***

“Most of us cannot go to school. Even those who do go to school find it extremely difficult to study. The problems of a school-going child are tremendous. For example, the light at home is not enough and children cannot use more kerosene to study because of the financial situation at home.”

### ***Family***

“Girls help with household work. Our parents usually do not let us work outside our homes. This leaves us with hardly any money for ourselves. The boys are not expected to do any work in the house. They have a lot of freedom and are found roaming the streets, while we are asked to keep quiet and made to stay at home. Our parents ask us to work in the farms. ‘Why do you want to study?’ they ask us. Sometimes we feel like running away from home. But we feel tied because we have no idea what the world outside is like.”

### ***Alcohol***

“Many men drink and shout at their wives. This upsets the children.”

### ***Others***

“We work in the factories for long hours. Sometimes they lie to us and say that they will take us as apprentices. But they do not guarantee us a job in the future. In the factories the children do a lot of work. We are not given any bonus and the labour laws are not applicable to us. In the cashew factories, our hands hurt because of the work.”

“Boys tease girls.”

“There are some landlords in the village who are involved in land disputes with us. Because we do not own lands, we cannot build our houses. We have no facilities like electricity. Some of our homes do not have proper doors. We have to stay at home the whole day to guard the house and to take care of our brothers and sisters.”

“The temple is in ruins. It used to be a place for religious ceremonies and community programmes. We used to feel secure there. But now, we can no longer sit there. So we find it difficult to conduct Bhima Sangha meetings and cultural programmes.”

“There are very few fruit trees in the village now. There is no shade.”

“We are scared to go outside our homes in the night as there are no street lights.”

“There are no shops in our area and girls cannot even buy bangles for themselves. There are no tailoring shops either. We are forced to wear whatever our parents choose for us even though we do not like them most of the time.”

“There are no health facilities. Often we do not even know that we are ill. Because of this, it sometimes takes very long for us to recover from diseases.”

“We feel that by getting united as Bhima Sangha, by joining the struggle of working children and by participating in the functions of the local government, we can solve our problems.”

“The idea of Makkala Panchayat or children’s Panchayat originated with the emergence of the Shishu Panchayat in West Bengal, India. We felt that we should have a representative in the Panchayat (local government at the village level). It would be of great help to us. Also, when adult representatives are elected, they are not able to fulfil the aspirations of the electorate. It is difficult to even meet or talk to them. When they (the elected body) become big people, they do not remember you.”

“The elected body does not give us due recognition. The Makkala Panchayat Toofan Programme provided us a gateway to participate in the task force. Two or three children were official participants and they were able to represent the needs and problems of a larger group. Our voices were heard; but then as it was an adult’s Panchayat, our needs were taken into consideration only if they conformed in part or whole to the needs of the adult group. It was a combination of these factors that led us to the creation of the Makkala Panchayat.”<sup>4</sup>

– Nagaraja Kolkere, a founding member of Bhima Sangha and now President of Namma Sabha, a union of young artisans, Karnataka

## **Problem tree from members of Bhima Sangha from South Kanara**

### ***Leaves***

- The smallest wish of a child does not get fulfilled.
- Children do not have work that matches their ability.
- Traditional occupations have lost their value.

- Youngsters do not have opportunities to learn life skills.
- We work in slave-like conditions.
- Our income is not in keeping with our work.
- Employers exploit us.
- Resources are not distributed in a fair manner.
- Hospitals are not adequate.
- We are scared of darkness.
- We have health-related problems.
- We have fuel problems.
- Ration shops are not adequate.
- We do not have foot bridges.
- Street lights are not adequate.
- We lack toilet facilities.
- Transportation facilities are not adequate.
- We lack nutritional food.
- We do not have enough vocational training centres.
- We fear teachers.
- Our school education is not appropriate for our life.
- We do not have interest in the existing education system.
- We lack Anganawadis (child care centres).
- We do not have playgrounds.
- Plants and trees are not growing well. There is no water, there are no forests.
- The Government does not listen to our opinions.
- Children do not have a chance to interact with each other.
- Our unions are not recognised.
- We are abused by alcoholic parents.

### ***Trunk***

- Migration.
- Unemployment.
- Disappearance of traditional occupations.
- Flaws in the education system.
- Geographical problems such as lack of drinking water.
- Children's opinions are not considered when decisions concerning them are taken.
- We do not have any right over our land.

### ***Roots***

- Economic problems.
- Social, cultural problems.
- Gender discrimination.
- Caste discrimination.
- Discrimination between rich and poor.
- Geographical and environmental problems.
- No participation of children in decision-making.
- No respect for children's rights.

## **What needs to be done?**

### **Team from Tamil Nadu**

#### ***What should we, the working children, do?***

- We should form working children's unions and share our problems and difficulties with the Government and our communities.

- We should fight and persuade the Government to solve our problems.
- We should fight in unison against work/jobs that are harmful to our health.
- We should demand for the effective implementation of educational programmes of the Government.
- We should work to solve the problems that affect us.
- We should insist that the Government provides employment to our parents.
- We should share information with other children and motivate them to join our union.
- We should not hesitate to voice our needs and opinions at our village meetings.

***What should our parents do?***

- They should be mobilised.
- They should be sensitive to the problems that affect us.
- They should understand/analyse problems and take initiatives to solve them.
- They should approach the Government for our education.
- They should take adequate steps to tackle problems related to children's education and ill-health.
- They should understand the causes of poverty and approach the Government to eradicate it.
- They should support and understand working children.
- They should demand for Government facilities and programmes that benefit deserving candidates.
- They should oppose factories that employ children.

***What should our community do?***

- Our communities should be mobilised.
- Their programmes should be carried out collectively.
- They should demand the fulfilment of their expectations from the Government.
- They should be active and sensitive to issues. They should question the Government and make sure that the Government's programmes are implemented. They should plan collectively to meet the needs of the community.
- They should work together to educate their children.

***What should the Government do?***

- Should work towards fulfilling the basic needs of people.
- Should make employment opportunities available for our parents.
- Should provide education facilities and good, healthy and hygienic conditions.
- Should discuss with people, find out what they need, and fulfil those needs.
- The Grama Panchayat (local government at the local level) should function effectively.
- Should promote awareness about social issues in the community.
- Should lead the people.
- Should unite the people.

**Team from Bhima Sangha, South Kanara, Karnataka**

We have organised ourselves as Bhima Sangha in order:

- To identify ourselves as working children.
- To identify our problems and seek solutions for them.
- To fight for and get our rights.
- To protest against the exploitation and violence meted out to working children.
- To draw the attention of society to our problems.
- To fight for the right to participation from local to international levels in all decision-making processes concerning working children.
- To aim towards becoming a political power.
- Under the existing circumstances, there is no way out for us but to work. Therefore at the work place, we should be recognised and respected as employees. So, for now, we want to fight for fewer hours of work, education, leisure and protection at work.

- Our objective is to build a new society that is self-reliant, where there is no discrimination based on caste and gender, where there is no unemployment and poverty. We want to build a society where children will no longer be forced to work.

### ***What should we, the working children, do?***

- First of all, we should identify ourselves as working children.
- Form unions.
- Access information.
- Identify our problems.
- Create an awareness in our communities about our problems.
- Create an awareness in our governments about our problems.
- Protest against the various atrocities and exploitations committed against children.
- Realise and exercise the rights of working children.
- Be committed to sustainable development of our local resources.
- Draw the attention of society to our problems.
- Realise the right to representation of working children from local to international levels.
- Form Makkala Panchayat (children's Panchayats are structures that are parallel to the local government at the village level).
- Under the present circumstances, we have to work. But we should be recognised and respected as workers. We should have short durations of work, access to education, leisure, protection and other such facilities at work.
- We want to build a better world in which there is no caste discrimination, gender discrimination, unemployment and poverty.
- We will build a New World in which the entire society is self-dependent. Then children will no longer be forced to work.

### ***What should our families do?***

- They should encourage us to form working children's unions.
- When our problems are identified, they should recognise that these problems are theirs too and they should join us in addressing them.
- They should identify their problems and be mobilised to address them.
- They should actively take part in all our programmes.
- They should make time available for us to carry out our activities.
- They should respect our unions.
- They should participate along with us in our activities.
- They should discourage caste bias.
- Before sending us to work, they should find out how the employer is likely to treat us.

### ***What should our community do?***

- They should not discriminate between working children and school-going children.
- The community should accept that problems identified by children are those of the community and should support and encourage us to seek solutions to these problems. They should respect us.
- The community and we, the working children, should grow as a political power to have an impact on our situation.
- In our villages and within our unions, there should be no discrimination based on caste and gender. The community should encourage and respect this.
- During elections, the community should highlight the lack of basic facilities and the problems faced by them and their children. While exercising their votes they should make sure that they vote for candidates who would commit themselves to solving these problems.
- The community should rid itself of superstition.

- The community should identify its problems, place them before the Government and find solutions.
- While seeking solutions, the community should always keep in mind the impact it may have on children.
- The community should extend more support to girl children.
- The community should take care of its children.

***What should the NGOs do?***

- Should help in conducting surveys of working children.
- Should help in unionising working children and providing them with information.
- Should help us learn more about other working children.
- Should respect and encourage unions and see that the community also respects them.
- Should help us strengthen our unions.
- Should help in publicising working children's unions.
- Should inform working children and give them inputs as to how to build unions.
- Should provide inputs on how to solve basic economic problems faced by the community.
- Should help us when we discuss our problems with the Government.
- Should provide inputs on how to solve caste and gender barriers.
- Should assist us when we make demands on the Government to solve our problems.
- Should facilitate our participation at different fora – from local to international levels.

***What should the Government do?***

- The Government should improve the economic situation of the community. It should compulsorily solve the basic problems of the communities and provide children with appropriate education.
- The Government should support working children to build unions.
- Should respect our unions.
- Should recognise our problems and solve them.
- Should make our families and communities more aware.
- Should provide us with opportunities to participate in their programmes.
- In all decisions concerning working children, their representatives should be included.
- Should listen to working children.
- Should help working children in accessing those rights in the CRC.
- Should understand the situation of working children and stop the abuse of working children. Should formulate necessary legislation.
- Should provide education to suit necessities. Should combine education and life skills.
- As long as it is necessary for children to work, the Government should protect them. Children should work according to their abilities and receive wages that are duly theirs. The Government should provide children with leisure and other facilities.
- Should ensure that there is no discrimination based on caste and gender.

**Team from Bhima Sangha, Bangalore, Karnataka**

***What should we, the working children, do?***

- We must get together as a union and identify ourselves with other working children.
- We should give information to other working children and their unions.
- We should identify our problems in groups and try to solve them.
- We should be better informed.
- We should write letters to the concerned officials regarding our problems, and meet them for discussions.
- We should continue with our efforts to seek solutions to our problems.
- By strengthening our unions, we should make the Government take notice of our organisations.
- In all decision-making processes concerning working children, the Government should ensure that working children are represented.

***What should our parents do?***

- Parents should allow children to participate in meetings and programmes.
- Parents should respect our union and extend support.
- Parents should encourage and participate in all programmes of their children.

#### ***What should the community do?***

- Community members should help working children build their unions, and support them.
- In all programmes of the community, children should be made to participate actively.
- The community should help children identify problems in the area. They should help working children in all their programmes by fund-raising and through other contributions.
- Community members should ensure that while making suggestions to the Government, children have an equal say.

#### ***What should the Government do?***

- The Government should recognise and respect working children's unions.
- The Government should give work to children according to their capacities.
- The Government should bring into effect a legislation to give children wages that are theirs by right.
- The Government should provide appropriate education in schools, and there should be no discrimination.
- The Government should protect street and working children.
- The Government should consult working children and work in partnership with their unions to solve problems.
- The Government should solve all basic problems faced by communities.
- We should realise the rights that are in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Our parents should also be given information about the CRC.

#### ***What should the NGOs do?***

- NGOs should provide the necessary information to working children and their unions.
- Until working children's unions are strengthened, NGOs should extend support to children and provide them with relevant information.
- NGOs should help working children to establish links with other unions of working children.
- NGOs should assist working children's unions to interact with the Government and its officials.

#### ***What should the Government do?***

- Right from local to international levels, there should be an organised representation of working children in all decision-making processes concerning them.
- In any programme, priority should be given to girl children.
- The problem of working children should be given national importance.
- An alternative should be in place before removing children from hazardous work places.

### **Team from Mumbai, Maharashtra**

#### ***What should we, the working children, do?***

“We have a roof over our heads (Ghar Ho Tho Aisa),<sup>5</sup> while many children are out on the streets and are being harassed by the police. Our priority area was, ‘What can we do for the children on the streets?’ Three groups were formed after meeting with these children in the nights: Ujaala, Jagruti and Udaan.”

“The children from Udaan held discussions with children on the streets and pushed ‘shelter’ as an important objective. It was the responsibility of the Government to provide them shelter. It was decided that all children come together and go on a ‘hunger strike’ to make their demand.”

– Vinod, member of Udaan, Mumbai

### **Team from Orissa**

#### ***What should we, the working children, do?***

Children in the Kasipur area are at a high level of participation though they are not organised in the form of a group or a union. There are several instances where children have brought about a change. For example, they borrowed Rs40 from Agrageemee (the NGO that facilitates their forum) to release a

bonded labourer. He, in return, lent his plot of land to the children to cultivate on it for a whole season. The children sold the produce and put the money in their school fund. During melas, children participate in a 'mock parliament'.

### **Why should we respond to the GOI Report?**

The following exercise was conducted before child participants discussed the contents of the official report by the Government of India.

#### ***Why should we, the working children, learn about what has been reported by the Government of India in its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child?***

- We are working children. We are the ones who are denied our rights. We have to read this report because it concerns us.
- To know what has been written about us. If anything wrong has been written in it, we can learn about that too.
- Elected representatives say young children should not work for long hours. They claim to ensure the rights of working children. We have to read the report to find out what they have done to achieve this.
- We want to find out what this report says and share it with other working children and our families.
- Children are harassed in many ways in the factories. We want to find out from the report what the Government has done about this.
- We want to learn how much work the Government has done to assist working children. We want to find out how much we have actually benefited from it.
- To find out if the Government has accomplished all that it claims to have done in the report. If not, demand that the Government lives up to its claims.
- To identify what action taken by the Government has helped us and what has harmed us.
- To find out if all the opportunities and facilities enshrined in the CRC have been made available to us by the Government.
- We can learn about the status of children in our country – e.g. their work status, their education status and their health status.
- We can find out if the Government claims to have carried out certain actions in the report, when in reality it may not have done so.

#### ***Why should we respond to the GOI Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in our 'Working Children's Report'?***

- After identifying what actions of the Government have helped us and what have harmed us, we will write about them in our report so that such actions are not repeated.
- According to the CRC, all State Parties have to submit periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In the preparation process of such reports, representatives of working children should be involved.
- We should insist that children have access to all facilities from the village to the national level.
- We hope that the Government will listen to our opinions expressed in our report and assist us.
- We are the ones experiencing the problems and, therefore, we have to write our report and inform the world about our problems and our opinions.
- If any information regarding us has been left out in the GOI Report, we can include it in our report.
- The police have not supported us in our protests and struggles. We want to express that in our report.
- During elections, our Chief Minister had promised to allocate budgets to address our problems, but later took no action in this regard. So, in our report, we would like to say what the politicians have done for us.
- Through this report we, the working children, want to earn support and cooperation from the United Nations and from all those who will read our report.

### **Our responses to the GOI Report**

In the following section, representatives of working children have responded to the GOI Report and not to the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Please refer to corresponding sections in the report of the GOI when you read the comments made by the children.

***Article 1: Age of the child, a dilemma***

- Children below the age of 18 years are not given voting rights. They are also not eligible for loans. The Government should, in a uniform manner, consider all children below the age of 18 as children.  
– Girish, Bhavani
- When we want to vote, they say ‘you cannot vote because you are children’. But when we make any mistake at work, they say ‘what is wrong with you, are you a child?’  
– Subramanyam

***Article 2: Non-discrimination***

- In my locality a 12-year old child is married. Her husband is 25 years old. Whenever her husband comes, she cries. If she does not go to her husband’s home, they brand her.  
– Amru
- In our cities, there is a lot of discrimination between the rich and the poor. This discrimination should be added to the list of discriminations mentioned in the GOI Report.  
– Subramanyam
- There is very little improvement in our village regarding caste discrimination. If people from the lower castes go to the houses of upper caste people, they are made to sit outside. They are not allowed to draw water from the wells. If people get married outside their castes, they are not allowed into the house.  
– Bhavani, Ramesh
- In our village, it is quite common for a 14–15-year old to get married. Money and gold have to be given as dowry.  
– Jayashankar, Thangamary, Tamil Nadu
- If girls come late after work, people ask ‘whom were you roaming around with?’  
– Subramanium
- There is a lot of discrimination between rich children and poor children in schools. If rich children stop going to school, teachers visit them at home and try to get them back to school. If a poor girl leaves school, they say ‘let her drop out of school, in any case what would she gain at school?’  
– Jayalakshmi
- At school, if rich children get beaten, they go and complain at home. Their parents come and question the teachers. But poor children are continuously beaten, even then they come to school with great difficulty.  
– Jayashankar
- When poor children come to school in torn clothes, they are made to sit in the back rows of the class.  
– Subramanyam
- If poor children are unable to pay fees on time, they are ridiculed in front of the entire class.  
– Bhavani
- In my village, children are not only scolded, they are also beaten and made to kneel in sand. If children with disability come to school, the teacher asks them ‘why do you come to school?’ and makes them sit in a corner.  
– Jayasankar
- In our village, most of the children going to school are boys. Girls work in the match factories.  
– Jayasankar
- People generally abuse rag-pickers if they happen to go near their houses.  
– Amru
- The Government states that it has schemes for adolescent girls in the age group of 15–18 years. No one in my village has benefited from it.  
– Ramesh

- No one in my village has taken part in those schemes.  
– Jayasankar
- All disability-related rehabilitation is available in villages that are close to urban areas. People in remote villages do not have access to it. Information about these schemes is sometimes given to the Panchayat (local government). But before eligible persons get the information, disbursement would already have been done.  
– Bhavani
- In our village, boys receive better care than girls.  
– Jayashankar
- Street children cannot go to school.  
– Subramanyam
- Children of street dwellers in my area get drenched in drain water. They sleep on the roads. Why does the Government not provide homes for the poor?
- The Government gives books to children from scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) families. Teachers say ‘you SC, ST children get everything served at home, you need not even come to school to collect them’. If we are not able to buy the uniform on time, they say ‘are you waiting for the Government to buy your uniforms too?’  
– Jayalakshmi

***A group of girls (14–18 years) living on the pavements of Mumbai discussed specific issues related to young girls.***

“The eldest daughter always has more responsibility ... to fetch water, clean the house, look after younger brothers and sisters, wash vessels, wash clothes. And also to help mother in small jobs which she takes up, like painting saris.”

“Mothers teach daughters household work.”

“Boys never do household or domestic work. Only girls have to do it.”

“Those girls who want to study are never allowed to do so. I am unable to study in the day because the TV or the tape recorder is always on. I study in the night. If my brother wants to study then I must not make any noise at home.”

“I am never allowed to go out. If I do, both my mother and brother hit me. When we go out, people in the community look at us as if they have never seen us. They talk behind our backs and call us names.”

“If I laugh, people wonder why I am laughing and they complain to my parents that I was laughing.”

“If I go out to the toilet and happen to speak to a boy, I have to face so many questions ... it is a big problem.”

“Even if two girls go together, people talk and say that they must be talking about boys.”

***Article 3: Best interest of the child***

- It is not enough if the Government says that it has made a provision for this in the Indian Constitution. If it was so, there would have been no need for us children to slog at work and at home. Such provisions should be reflected in action.  
– Bhavani
- A provision for the best interest of the child may be made in the Constitution. But that makes no difference if there is no corresponding action.  
– Girish
- Children should not only be removed from hazardous work but should also be provided with good alternatives.
- Multinationals have come into our country. They are not concerned about our communities or our children. They have created so many chemical problems. They may bring some gains to the country, but the loss they cause us is double the gain.
- Multinationals release their products into our markets. Our parents do not have a chance to survive. Their occupations get affected and this will harm us children.

- Girish
- Our Constitution is 40 years old. Multinationals started entering our country 5 years ago. How come the provision in the Constitution did not stop them from entering our country?
- Girish
- If small changes are made in the existing programmes, they can make a big difference to children and communities. For example, if the Anganawadis (child care centres) are made full time, parents are free to go to work and many older children are free to go to school.
- Bhavani, Girish

***Article 4: Obligation to protect all the rights of the child***

- What provision has been made in the Constitution for this? What has been done about this? If this provision did have a prominent position as stated by the Government, why would working children exist in our country? Why have we not got our rights?
- Girish
- Why would street children continue to exist? Why would children be trafficked and sold?
- Subramanyam
- Not one of our rights has been protected. If our rights were protected – from the village level to the national level – we would not have been in this situation.
- Bhavani
- If our rights were protected, liquor and gambling would have been banned. Our parents would not have been able to drink or gamble, and our problems would have reduced.
- Bhavani
- If all our rights were protected, we need not have had to discuss child rights. If anyone tried to explain about child rights to us, we would say ‘we know it all’.
- Ramesh
- We do not accept what the Government says in its report regarding this right.

***Article 5: Obligation to respect parental responsibilities and rights***

- The Government should communicate to our parents that it respects their responsibilities and rights. It is not enough if it is only stated in their report.
- Bhavani
- How exactly does the Government respect our parents and their rights?
- Subramanyam
- My parents are well aware of my problems. What they lack is the capacity to deal with those problems. The Government cannot place all the responsibilities on our parents. Instead, it should help parents to improve the quality of life of their children.
- Bhavani
- Parents want good jobs for their children. The Government should provide financial and other assistance to them to fulfil their aspirations.

***Article 6: Right to survival***

- For most children in our villages, there is no opportunity to survive and grow.
- Working children cannot be abruptly pulled out from work. Before that, alternative arrangements have to be made because all children have a right to survival.
- In our villages and slums, because of filthy water and insufficient food children are dying of illness.
- In our villages, when there is illness in poor families, there is no money to go to the doctor. The disease gets worse and children die.
- The Government should provide nutritious, good and indigenous food in sufficient quantities to children.
- Children should not die. But when some people learn that the baby is a girl, they kill it while still in the womb.

– Amru, Subramanyam, Anjali, Ramesh

- Due to extreme poverty at home, little children have to work. The education required for their development and future is not available to them.

– Ramesh, Subramanyam

- In Anganawadis (child care centres) why are little children not being given the nutritious food they are supposed to get?

– Subramanyam

### ***Article 7: Name and nationality***

- Facilities for birth registration should be provided in every village. As there is only one Registration Centre for 10–12 villages, it is inconvenient to register. When the process gets delayed, people forget the date/year of birth and give inaccurate dates.

– Bhavani

- When Gram Sahayaks (village assistants) visit our village, they collect information from any person in the village. The information may be inaccurate. Also, if we require certificates, we have to go to the office which is not in our village.

– Jayasankar

- The Government says that there is a provision for late registration. But if registration is delayed, wrong dates are sometimes registered.

– Bhavani

### ***Article 8: Child's right to identity***

- The Government says that they protect *all* our rights. We are very surprised that the Government does not say anything about this particular right. What does that mean?

– Girish

- If the Government does not recognise the problems identified by us, who else will acknowledge these problems?

– Anjali, Jayasankar, Thangamary, Jayalakshmi, Girish

### ***Article 9: A child shall not be separated from parents***

- Our parents do not have good jobs. That is the reason for their inability to provide good conditions for our development. The Government should create good job opportunities for our parents.
- The Government says that children should be with parents. If there are fights between parents, the Government should give information regarding the problems that can be created by these fights.
- The Government says that children can be separated from parents if parents themselves abuse children. Instead of that, there should be no liquor shops in and around residential areas because this creates fights at home. This affects children and mothers. The Government should ban the sale of all intoxicants.
- If children are forced to leave home because of household violence, the Government should make arrangements to take care of them. It should provide them with protection and care.

– Amru, Subramanyam, Anjali, Ramesh

### ***Article 12: Respect for views of children***

### ***Article 13: Right to participate, freedom of expression and access to information***

- The Government is not providing us with opportunities to express our opinions and to participate in decision-making processes and programme implementation. As the impact of these programmes is on children, the Government should consult us. If not, the impact may harm us and put us in a worse situation.

– Bhavani

- The Government says that we have a right to information. But who is going to provide that information?

– Jayalakshmi

- If parents are going to decide how much information children need, then children will not realise their right to information. Children should take this decision.

– Ramesh

- The Government should not be the authority to stipulate the rights that children should have. Children themselves should say 'these are the rights we require'.  
– Ramesh
- We know very well the rights that we should demand. We also have responsibilities corresponding to our rights. We are aware that our rights should not be misused.  
– Jayasankar
- Children do have a right to express their opinions. When any plans regarding administration are being made, children have to be consulted.
- In our villages, though adults and children perform the same jobs, children are paid less. This situation where children are not considered equal to adults has not changed at all.  
– Bhavani
- After the Government ratified the Convention, it has not taken its implementation seriously.  
– Ramesh

***Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion***

- The Government says that 'there are 100 million children living in conditions of abject poverty and neglect'. How is it possible for these 100 million children to have a right to think and a conscience?  
– Jayasankar
- When children have their own thoughts, society comes in their way. For example, if a girl chooses to plough in the field, society says 'What a shame, she is a girl and she wants to plough'. The Government should break down such barriers. Then children will be able to act on the basis of their thoughts.  
– Bhavani
- It is not enough if parents encourage children to exercise their rights. Society should also provide such encouragement.  
– Girish
- The Government holds our parents responsible to give us the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Our parents themselves do not have these rights. How can they provide these rights to us? The Government has kept our parents ignorant. Our parents are in no position today to give us information.  
– Jayasankar
- If members of one religion approach members of another to raise funds for a good cause, they say 'Why do you come to us? Go to your own people'. People should not discriminate between religions in this manner. Parents influence children. Soon they too start discriminating among their friends.  
– Anjali
- On the one hand, if we start a struggle demanding that we should have access to and enjoy our rights, adults consider us rebels. On the other hand, they do not discuss with us and listen to our opinions, and find solutions to our problems.  
– Jayasankar
- The Government says I have a right to thought. I want to go to school and to achieve something in life. But the situation in my house makes it compulsory for me to go to work. What has the Government done about this?  
– Thangamary
- Yes, we agree with the Government that children should have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. But for children belonging to certain religions, it is becoming difficult to practise their faith, e.g. children living in Jammu and Kashmir.  
– Girish
- The Government writes that if the practise of religion by one community affects the others, it can intervene. But there have been many communal riots. When these riots took place, what has the Government really done? What is the Government doing now to prevent such riots from taking place?

***The fundamental issue facing children from Jogeshwari in North Bombay was the increasing communalisation in the area, which was building up over the years and erupted in large-scale violence and rioting in December 1992 and January 1993. Most of the discussions with children centred on this.***

“I felt very scared during the riots, especially when our houses were broken. The rioters broke our house that was built with hard-earned money. I felt like crying.”

“People were so afraid that they could not speak to each other.”

“There was total silence. And once in a while, sounds of bullets and people screaming.”

“I get scared ... of bombs.”

“I live next to the graveyard. For days during and after the riots, we used to continuously get the smell of fresh incense sticks.” (Incense sticks are lit near dead bodies as a religious practice)

“My mother was burnt during the riots.”

“I saw people being burnt alive and others stabbed with choppers and swords.”

“The police started the riots. They also caught hold of people who were trying to put fire.”

“I get scared of:

- storms
- a dark night
- silence
- whenever I hear something scary
- riots
- a dead body, a corpse.”

***Article 15: Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly***

- The Government should support working children to form unions. “Don’t we have a right to protect our own rights? How fair is this?”
- When the issue of child rights is publicised in the media, representatives of working children’s unions should be consulted.
- We have waited for opportunities and for our right to participate for so many years. How many more years should we wait?
- Children have a right to be treated as equals.
- Children have a right to express their opinions.
- Children have a right to enjoy childhood.
- Children have a right to demand that adults listen to their voices.
- Children have a right to participate.
- Children have a right to be protected and to protect themselves.
- Children have a right to a society that is clean and peaceful.
- Children have a right to good education.
- Children have a right to good health.
- Children have a right to collect and share information.
- Children have a right to play.
- Children have a right to speak.
- Children have a right to live.
- Children have a right to take decisions.
- Children have a right to move freely.
- Children have a right to take responsibilities.
- Children have a right to entertainment.
- Children have a right to meet each other.
- Children have a right to protest against injustice.

- Children have a right to identify problems and find solutions for them.
- We feel that we can realise the rights mentioned above if we organise ourselves as unions.

***Article 16: No child will be subject to unlawful entry into privacy***

- The Government claims that Public Interest Litigations have been successful in protecting the rights of children. We do not have any information about this.
- The Government has not rehabilitated any children in bondage in our villages. A large number of children and their families are still in bondage situations. The Government has not provided them with anything.  
– Jayasankar
- This is just a dream of the Government at the moment. It has to be made a reality.  
– Girish, Bhavani
- The Government writes that with regard to medical situations, decisions about treatment have to be made with the consent of parents or guardians. But the Government hospitals treat us without informing us about what they are doing. They take a lot of money from us and from our parents.  
– Thangamary
- In village after village, girls and women are being raped. This has to be stopped. The Government should try and prevent the incidence of all exploitations listed in its report. It should ensure that such exploitative situations are not created.  
– Bhavani
- The Government says that awareness about child abuse is increasing. If so, then why are the number of child abuse cases increasing?  
– Girish

***Article 17: Children's access to mass media***

- Even though some of us have expressed our problems through the media, the Government has not solved them.  
– Amru, Subramanyam, Anjali, Ramesh
- We have not seen many articles on children's rights in our local language newspapers. If they appear in our language, we can read them.  
– Ramesh
- Most of us are not aware that 14 November 1994 was celebrated as child rights day by the media.  
– Subramanyam
- The Government says that news about disasters like earthquakes and cyclones are widely covered by the media. Information related to child development should also appear more frequently in the media. Awareness about children's rights should be generated through the media.
- The responses and opinions expressed by working children should appear in print and other media.
- The media should respect the views of working children.

***Article 19: Protect the child from physical/mental violence, injury or abuse – neglect or negligent treatment***

- We are very surprised that the Government has not reported anything regarding this right.  
– Ramesh
- Children are abused and exploited in factories, hotels and garages. When labour inspectors visit these places, children are hidden in the bathrooms and in drums. The inspectors are given bribes and sent away. If the Government cannot do anything about this, what is the use of having a Government?  
– Amru
- Before the officials visit the factories for inspection, they inform the employers. The employers either give us a holiday or send us home through the back door.  
– Ramesh, Subramanyam

- The Government should take stringent action so that children do not work in such places. The police see children working in hotels; they get water and cigarettes supplied by these children. But they do not take action. Who then should protect us?

– Subramanyam

- It is very important that before the Government releases children from factories and other work places, alternative arrangements should be made for them.

– Ramesh

### ***Article 20: Alternative family care programmes for children deprived of a family environment***

- Why does the Government remove neglected children from their homes and place them in juvenile homes? Why do parents neglect their children in the first place? Is it because of poverty or for some other reason? Does the Government not plan to prevent neglect of children by family?

- It is not enough if 10,000 children have been provided alternative family care. Should the other 115 million children be left to the mercy of the streets?

– Bhavani

- If alternative family care programmes were adequate, why would children live on the streets?

– Girish

- We are working children. Why does the Government want to send us to beggars' colonies?

– Lama

- The Government states that the number of children on the streets is increasing. If they had effectively carried out their programmes in the villages, this would not have happened.

– Bhavani

- In their National Policy, the Government says that children should be with their families. The same Government sets up residential homes and separates children from their families.

– Girish

- There are no programmes for children who are orphans in our villages. Such programmes should take place from the village to the national level.

– Bhavani

- With simple changes in the juvenile homes, the Government may be able to reach many more children.

– Girish

- The Government has planned many programmes. But these programmes have not been implemented. Only after implementation will we be able to see how beneficial they have been.

– Jayasankar

- The Government claims they have implemented many programmes. These programmes have not taken place in our village. Are they real or not?

- In my locality there are about 1000 huts. Children who rag-pick live there. None of them have guardians. Not a single child from here has been to an alternative family care programme.

– Anjali

- The Government reports that it is carrying out many programmes. At the same time it mentions that there are a large number of destitute. What then is the reason for this? What is going to be done to prevent destitution in the future?

– Jayasankar

- The Government writes that it has assisted children during disasters. But in our village when there were floods, children got washed away. No assistance was given to the family members of these children.

– Jayasankar

### ***Article 21: Adoption***

### ***Article 35: Prevention of abduction and sale/trafficking of children***

- When children are adopted, there should be no discrimination against girls. They should be chosen and considered equal to boys.
- More children should be adopted all over the country. Adoption should not be treated like a sale.
- Even though NGOs are encouraged to work with children on the streets, such children continue to live on the streets in many parts of the country. Their situation remains the same. A sincere effort has to be made to address this problem.
 

– Amru, Subramanyam, Anjali, Ramesh
- If children on the streets had realised their rights, these problems would not have existed.
 

– Ramesh

### ***Article 23: The disabled child***

- The Government has a lot of money and interest to construct big buildings. But with regard to disabled children, the Government says ‘financial allocation is not adequate’.
 

– Amru
- The Government reports that certain facilities are available to disabled children in the cities. But then disabled children in the villages are at a disadvantage. The Government should lay emphasis on their needs.
 

– Jayalakshmi
- The Government will have to provide an adequate budget for disabled children.
- It is not appropriate to create facilities for disabled children only in the cities. Children should be able to live close to their homes with the love and affection of their families.
- The Government says that it provides employment opportunities to disabled youth. But no disabled young person in my village has been employed by the Government or provided with vocational skills.
- Modern technology should be used to prevent disability. The Government should take positive decisions about the funds required for this purpose.
 

– Ramesh
- Disabled children do not have opportunities to participate in sports and other activities in the village.
 

– Amru, Subramanyam, Anjali

### ***Article 24: Health and health services***

- The Government claims that providing health services is one of its primary duties. But children on the street bathe in filthy water. This leads to diseases.
 

– Bhavani
- The Government mentions that it is providing for the physical, mental and social development of children. But it is not doing so. A large number of children are mentally and physically challenged. When will the Government provide the best for children’s health? Will it take one/two/three years or 20 years?
 

– Girish, Jayasankar
- A rag-picking child went to bathe in the drain. He died. When we try to stop other children from bathing there, they say ‘What else is there for us? Where do we find better water?’
 

– Anjali
- The health situation in the country is not getting better. Children are dying in slums. Many children also die because of their work.
 

– Bhavani
- The Government does not have any time-frame to fulfil its obligation. How can people accept this?
 

– Girish
- Six children were infected with tuberculosis. They went from house to house collecting money for their treatment. But two of them died.
 

– Anjali
- The Government frankly reports that health facilities are more accessible to the rich than to the poor. But there are no Government programmes to solve this problem of discrimination.

- Girish

■ The Government reports that regular check-ups are conducted for new-born children. But no such thing is happening in our village.

– Jayasankar
- There are Government hospitals in our village. But most people do not go there because the treatment given there is not good.

– Jayasankar, Thangamary
- Which health programmes has the Government formulated for the 110 million working children of this country? Has it provided the help and assistance required by us? What is the use of presenting only figures?

– Jayasankar
- It is true that family planning measures are being implemented not on a compulsory but on a voluntary basis. But if the child is a girl, no one undergoes a family planning operation until a boy is born.

– Thangamary
- There are doctors who practise herbal medicines in our villages. But we did not know that the Government was conducting training for them.

***Article 25: Protection, care and treatment of children***

***Article 26: Children's right to social security***

- The Government is not protecting children.

– Bhavani
- If the Government is really able to provide us with protection and care and give us the right to social security, the quality of our lives will really improve.

– Jayasankar
- If the Government carries out all its work keeping the good of children in mind, we will automatically realise our right to social security.

– Girish
- If children had a right to social security, would they have been forced to toil in the factories?

– Bhavani

***Article 28: Right to education***

***Article 29: Right to education, which will lead to development of the child***

- The Government is planning to implement 'compulsory education'. It should consult children in every village and find out whether they want this or not.

– Bhavani
- Forty years ago, the Government had said 'within the next 10 years all children will be provided with education'. It is not enough if such declarations are made, they have to be enacted.

– Ramesh
- We should receive education that is appropriate to us and which will help us in our lives.

– Jayalakshmi, Ramesh
- If teachers had done their work well, why would so many children drop out of school and start working?

– Subramanyam
- If our basic problems are solved, we will go to school.

– Bhavani
- The Government says that there will be at least a blackboard and chalk in every school. What is the use of blackboard and chalk when there is no teacher?

– Girish
- In a place like Bangalore city, children have to walk 3–4km to go to school. There is heavy traffic on the roads. This makes it very difficult for them. Each area should have its own school.
- The Government has said that it is laying emphasis on the school enrolment of tribal girls. If so, why are tribal girls dropping out of school in such large numbers?

- Jayalakshmi
- When children who have never been to school or children who have dropped out of school study in non-formal centres, society does not respect them even if their curriculum is equivalent to class 10. They do not get any certificates, so it is difficult for them to find jobs. Therefore, the Government should issue certificates to children who have studied in non-formal education centres.
 

– Ramesh
  - The Government says that there are not enough teachers in the schools. Yet, there are so many people who have completed their Teacher Training Courses. The Government should recruit them. Then the problem of unemployment will also be reduced.
 

– Girish
  - If the situation at home is improved, parents will be able to send their children to school.
 

– Jayasankar
  - If children suddenly leave school, teachers should compulsorily visit each house and find out why they have dropped out.
 

– Jayasankar
  - Children who are keen to go to school lose interest because of the uninteresting way in which they are taught. Often teachers behave badly towards them and insult them. Therefore, it is not enough to announce that the TCH training will be modified. It has to be effectively done.
 

– Girish
  - The Government claims that it will provide education to children under 14. But what about children above 14 years of age? Do they have to live as illiterates all their lives?
 

– Jayasankar
  - The Government says that it will strengthen the community, but it never does. When our community demanded a ration shop, the Government did not take our demand into consideration. We made this demand because we had to walk three miles to reach the nearest ration shop.
 

– Bhavani
  - Facilities to play games should be provided to children at schools so that they do not find school boring. Sports equipment to play cricket, hockey and volleyball should be provided in the villages just as it is provided in city schools. Then children will go to school at least to play. The Government should pay attention to this aspect.
 

– Jayasankar

### ***Article 30: Right to leisure and culture***

- What the Government says about protecting the culture of minorities remains a good intention. It should be made legally binding.
 

– Jayalakshmi, Ramesh
- The present education system is not good. Some teachers tease and humiliate children of certain communities. This should be stopped immediately.
 

– Jayalakshmi, Ramesh
- The ‘sports’ referred to by the Government in its report is perhaps enjoyed by school children. But for a large number of working children like us, the Government has not provided any such opportunities.
 

– Jayalakshmi
- For children who work in incense factories, match factories, hotels, etc., there is no leisure or rest.
 

– Subramanyam
- In its report, the Government says that working children should have leisure. As this is extremely important, such a law should be made and implemented.
 

– Ramesh
- What the Government reports about all children having an opportunity to take part in sports is not true. Many teachers give such chances only to rich children.

- Jayalakshmi

■ Even if we have leisure sometimes, there is no place to play in the city.

– Subramanyam
- The Government mentions ‘Bal Bhavan’ (children’s recreation centres) in its report. But such Bal Bhavans exist only in cities like Bangalore, etc. Children from the villages have not even heard of them.

– Jayalakshmi
- The Government says that it produces good books for children. In our village we have seen no such books.

– Ramesh
- The Government reports that it has an office to produce good films for children and young people. We have not seen films made by this office.

– Subramanyam

***Article 32: Child labour and children in situations of exploitation***

- Financial poverty is one of the causes of child labour. So if the poverty of families is addressed, many children will stop working and start going to school.

– Jayasankar
- In incense factories, we get chest pain because we have to keep blowing up packets. The dust gets into our eyes and it burns.

– Subramanyam
- The Government implies that parents forcefully send children to work. But it is the ‘economic situation’ of the family that forces children to work.

– Girish
- The Government says that it will address the problem of child labour depending upon ‘resource availability’. But if it waits until more ‘resources’ are available, the number of child labourers will have grown enormously. The amount of resources required will also be much more. It would be good if the Government immediately raised its budget allocation to solve the problems of child labour.

– Ramesh
- We have waited for opportunities and for our right to participate for so many years. How many more years should we wait?

– Subramanyam
- Instead of spending Rs67 crore on awareness raising programmes, if the Government had spent the same amount to solve our basic problems, then the child labour problem would have been better addressed.

– Girish
- The Government has spent Rs27 crore to conduct a survey to find out the number of child labourers in the country. This amount is a waste because, after the survey, the Government says there are only 20 million working children in India, which is a wrong figure. There are more than 100 million working children in our country. The money wasted on the survey could have been more useful in addressing our basic problems.

– Girish, Bhavani
- The Government says that the problem of child labour is large in magnitude, and its limited resources are not enough to solve the problem. However, the more the delay, the more the resources that will be needed.

– Ramesh
- It appears that the Government has recently woken up to the problem of child workers. Even then, children continue to work in match factories. Employers of the match factories have not taken any note of the laws. The laws are not being implemented effectively.

– Jayasankar
- The Government states that children should not work in certain hazardous sectors. Instead, if the Government identifies the problems faced by such children and solves them, there will be no need for them to work. If those problems are not solved, children may stop work in one sector, but move on to another.

–Ramesh

***Article 33: Drug abuse***

- The Government says that it will protect children from drug abuse. But this is not only a children's problem, it is also a problem faced by adults. Along with protection, the Government should see where the problem originates from and attack it at the roots. Then the problem will automatically get solved.

– Ramesh

- Drug abuse is also affecting adults severely. Therefore it has to be totally prevented.

– Girish

***Article 34: Protect the child from sexual abuse***

- When children are sexually abused, very quick action should be taken.

– Girish

***Article 36: Protect the child from all forms of exploitation***

- Children working in extremely difficult situations should be removed from there, and alternative arrangements should be made immediately.

– Ramesh

- The Government says that it will protect children from parental abuse. That is not enough. The police ill-treat children too. What will the Government do about this?

– Ramesh

- Children working in hotels often get hurt and catch skin diseases. If they try to rest, the employers hit them. Children are not allowed to get out of the hotel and to speak out. They are abused inside the hotel. How can this be stopped?

– Jayasankar

***Article 37: Children in conflict with the law***

***Article 39: Children in conflict with the law***

***Article 40: Children in conflict with the law***

- In our village and Taluk, there is no separate court for people under the age of 21.

– Ramesh

- When children are released from remand homes, they should be able to get work. They do not get jobs because they are branded as thieves and as children who went to jail.

– Subramanyam, Ramesh

- When we look around, we find that juvenile crime has not gone down as the Government claims. Because when children are very poor, their life is very difficult. When nobody bothers with them, they go their own way. Therefore the Government should make sure that this does not happen.

– Subramanyam

- Children who are considered delinquents and children who are considered neglected cannot be grouped together in juvenile homes. They need different kinds of services.

- When children steal, they are taken to the police station and beaten. This is what happens in my area.

- The police are a nuisance to people who sleep on the streets because they take people away and beat them.

- When children have done something wrong, the police beat them up even before they enquire into the matter.

- What children undergo at juvenile homes is definitely not 'corrective'. In fact, it makes the situation worse for the child.

- When children go wrong they should not be called delinquents if they have to change for the better. The term juvenile delinquents should not be used.

– Ramesh

***Article 38: Children in armed conflict***

- Children under 18 years should not be enrolled in wars, because it is dangerous.

- It is not sufficient if the Government sets up funds for children of war victims. The money set aside should be used effectively when children have lost their parents. It is not enough if they are given money, they should be provided with alternative arrangements.
- Before wars and conflicts arise, the Government should discuss and try to solve their problems or address their demands.

***Article 44: Government's report submission***

- The Government was supposed to submit its report in 1994. What was it doing until 1997?

– Subramanyam

**My dream village/city**

**My dream village**

In my dream village all the houses are alike. There is no discrimination between castes and between the rich and poor.

In schools, education includes arts and vocational training. There are roads, street lights and transport facilities. The village has good water facilities. All the houses get water directly from the water tank.

An Anganawadi (child care centre) is situated at the centre of the village and it works full time. In the Anganawadi, children learn arts, skills, games and information. Whenever problems arise, the local Government solves all the problems of the villagers.

A hospital, ration shop, and flag post are situated at the centre of the village. A forest and a river surround the village. It is a village with all the basic facilities and with no problems.

– Bhavani

**My dream village**

All the houses are big in my dream village. There are good hospital facilities in the village. There is a cricket ground because it is very necessary for our children. Our village primary school has an additional building. There are many teachers in the school. There is a water tank and all the houses have a tap so that water comes through the pipe right into the house. There is a good road in my village. My dream village has bus facilities and a ration (subsidised grocery) shop.

– Jayasankar

**My dream village**

This is how my dream village is. Trees grow all around. We have roads and buses. There is a police station because, in our village, people often fight. We have a primary school and a middle school. There is a hospital in my village. There is a ration (subsidised grocery) shop. There is a Balawadi (infant care centre) for small children.

– Thangamary

**Our dream house**

***As visualised by children living on the pavements of Mumbai***

When an exercise of building 'The Home of their Dreams' by modelling with clay, leaves, sticks and other waste material was going on, it was observed that in one of the groups the boys made the house while the girls made the vessels that were to be placed inside. The children also expressed that what was most important for them was a clean surrounding.

The house a young girl dreamt of and created through a clay model was labelled 'Shanti Nivas' – the House of Peace. Children emphasised the importance of having a toilet inside the house. A swing and a bed with a cotton mattress thrilled them. And they were very vocal about their wish that trees and flowers should surround the house.

**My dream city**

The people in my locality sleep inside big water pipes, which are stored there. They should have good shelter. Everybody should have a house. Free education should be provided in my school. There should be toys in the

school. The atmosphere in my school should be such that it gives us joy and makes us learn better. There should be a Government-run hospital that provides free, good medicines. There should be a medical store close by. It is not there now. I have to walk a long way to fetch drinking water. It should be made available near my place. Every house should have electricity. We should have a place to play. The potholes should be covered up.

There is a small vacant place near my house, which is dirty and used for playing cards and gambling. This should be stopped and converted into a playground for us and made into a residential area for those who do not have any shelter.

The Government simply says that it will do this and that. But it is not capable of doing anything. Either the NGOs should do it or we, as working children's unions, should do it.

– Amru

### **My dream village**

My dream village should be peaceful. There should be a river flowing by, full of fish, tortoises and snakes. It should have sand and stones. There should be a coconut grove and many nurseries on the banks of the river. It should have a bridge.

There should be a forest to provide us with cool shade and firewood. It should always be green. It should be full of birds and animals, with trees that bear fruits and flowers.

The village should have a well, full of water. There should be a green grazing yard for the cattle to feed on. Everybody should have good houses to stay in and toilets to use. Everybody should have an occupation and all the proper facilities. There should be a hospital, a Panchayat, a bank, shops, a hotel, a bus stand, an Anganawadi, street lights and electricity. There should be land for cultivation. The village should have a post office, a temple and good roads.

Schools should have appropriate education with a playground and flag post, and children should have time to play.

– Ramesh

### **My dream village**

It should have houses, wells, roads, a Panchayat, a primary school, a high school, a hospital, a medical store, a vocational training centre, an Anganawadi (to look after small children), education, entertainment and other skills for children. There should be a flag post at the centre of the village. There should be street lights and transport. Every household should have toilets, electricity, drinking water facility, television and telephone.

There should not be any discrimination between boys and girls, rich and poor, caste. Everybody should have equal opportunities.

There should be a river and a forest close by.

– Jayalakshmi

### **My dream city**

In my dream city, schools should be in a good environment. The best of teachers should teach there and give children a good education. It should have a good park and a playground for children.

My house should be in a nice place. There should be a road and other such facilities. Filthy water should flow out of the area through proper drainage systems. There should be a borewell in the area so that there is no problem for water. There should be a hospital with all the facilities. There should be a ration shop nearby and it should distribute the groceries fairly.

In my city there should be plants and trees. Because they will give us pure air and keep the environment green.

People should jointly celebrate all festivals and programmes.

In my city our Bhima Sangha should become strong.

– Anjali

### **My dream village**

One night when I was sleeping, I dreamt about my village. My dream village was like this ...

It is morning. Children are playing. Both girls and boys are going to school together. Little children go to the creche, youths to the junior college. Some of the elders are going to work, some to the ration shops, some are off by bus to the nearby city to buy their necessities. Some are taking their children to the hospitals. Some are going to the post office to post letters to their relatives who live far away. Children are engrossed in their discussions regarding Makkala Panchayat (children's Panchayat).

Some of the elders are involved in family occupations. Whether it is at work or at play, there is no discrimination between the poor and the rich, between boys and girls, and between one caste and another.

As all facilities and systems are in place, and the dreams of the people of my village have been realised, they are happy.

This dream inspires me to make my village a 'Dream Village'. For this, my family, my community, the local government, the NGO and I have started working. Come, let us together make our Nation a Dream Nation.

– Girish

### **My dream city**

There should be no fighting at home. It should be peaceful, quiet and in good surroundings.

There should be a borewell. If it is not working, the community members should raise money to get it repaired.

There should be a tank that provides water round the clock.

Children of both the rich and poor should be treated and taught alike at school. If children make mistakes, they should not be beaten or made to stand in the hot sun. There should be a flag post, a playground and other facilities at the school. There should be a borewell near the playground.

There should be a hospital and everybody should be treated alike. There should be a medical shop next to the hospital.

Factories should not be in residential areas. They should be at least 2km away. If they are too near, there will be smoke and waste, which will affect the health of the people. Factories should employ only those above 18 years of age.

The Government should formulate legislation to implement the CRC.

There should be no discrimination between caste and the rich and poor.

If a boy and a girl speak to each other and are friendly, it should not be misinterpreted. This is my dream city.

–Subramanyam

## **List of participants**

### **Child participants**

#### ***Madurai, Tamil Nadu***

Mariamala, 12 years

Ambika, 10 years

Uma, 8 years

Subha, 3 years

Kavita, 13 years

Pechiamma, 12 years

Thangamary

Jayasankar

#### ***Bal Mazdoor Sangh, Delhi***

Sanjay Kumar Visht, porter

Gagam, porter

Ajay, porter

Arun, porter

Mustafa, porter

Dharamendra, porter

Raju, porter

Khursheed, tea stall worker  
Salman Khan, datun seller  
Raju Kr Gupta, shopkeeper  
Ganesh, rag-picker  
Nurul, rag-picker  
Bablu, rag-picker  
Sukhram, rag-picker  
Manoja, tea stall worker  
Shahid, rag-picker  
Rajesh, rag-picker  
Rajuwafadar, porter  
Gyani, porter  
Sikandar, porter

***Mumbai, Maharashtra***

Vinod  
Sachin Gayakawad  
Amit Ansari  
Ramesh Ambulkar  
Yusuf  
Rashid  
Nitin  
Saddam  
Raju

***Bangalore, Karnataka***

Shyla  
Poornima  
Srinivas  
Sampangi  
Muniraj  
Annappa  
T Muniraj  
Raja  
Lakshmi  
Varalakshmi  
Devi  
Stella  
Manohar  
Lakshmi N  
Shantakumar  
Clara  
R K Varalakshmi  
Shiva  
Sudakar  
Anjali  
Subramanyam  
Amru

***Rayagada, Orissa***

Bandu

Shanti

***South Kanara, Karnataka***

Jayanthi

Lakshmana

Shivaram

Nagaraja

Raju

Rati

Babhi

Shankar

Saroja

Manjunath

Murgesh

Mallesh

Srimathi

Bhavani

Ramesh

Girish

Jayalakshmi

**Supporting adults**

Kavita, YUVA, Mumbai

Kashmir, YUVA, Mumbai

Rama, CWC, Bangalore

Sheela Devaraj, CWC/APSA, Bangalore

Valli, CWC, Bangalore

Raviraj, CWC, Bangalore

Vanaja, CWC, Bangalore

Krishna Kumar Tripathi, Butterflies, Delhi

Saroj Kumar Jena, Agragamee, Rayagada

Manohar, Agragamee, Rayagada

Manjunath, CWC, South Kanara

Mohanchandra, CWC, South Kanara

Venkatesh, CWC, South Kanara

Saroja, CEDAR, Madurai

Rathnavelu, Malarchi, Madurai

Thirunavukarasu, Malarchi, Madurai

Quote adults in the process: Cards:

Children:

CRC: 'Best interest of the child'

GOI Report: '1/3 children in abject poverty'

'40 years ago we promised education for all'

'CRC has right to association'

Evaluation:

**Sl no. Problem**

**YUVA Ankur Gramashrama Agragamee Malarchi**

- 1 No respect.  
Rights of working  
children not  
respected
- 2 Political. Police  
oppression
- 3 Difficult for  
children to  
organise and  
unionise

Families are  
oppressed

#### **Ankur**

##### **Sl no. Problems**

- 1 No security
- 2 No enjoyment  
of childhood
- 3 Parents give  
problems
- 4 Employers give  
a lot of work
- 5 Health problems
- 6 No love

Only if we do not  
go to work

Little, but it is  
there

Only parent love.  
Only father love

**Malarchi**

##### **Sl no. Problems**

- 1 Political  
interference and  
indifference
- 2 Adult
- 3 No fertile lands
- 4 Poverty
- 5 No political  
consciousness
- 6 No water

Little

Little

Little

unemployment

Little Little

In summer Little

#### **Gramashrama**

##### **Sl no. Problems**

- 1 Geographical
- 2 No education
- 3 No land rights
- 4 Description on  
Gender

At hom At home

#### **YUVA**

##### **Sl no.**

- 1 No food

##### **Problems**

#### **Aragamee**

##### **Sl no. Problems**

- 1 No forests

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Bharathi John

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