Children’s Manifesto
A Call for Change from the Rashtriya Bal Adhikar Sabha 2008
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INTRODUCTION

The grand promises made during elections have often ignored the nation’s children just because they have no voting rights. In building a nation fit for children, India’s political parties cannot afford to turn a deaf ear to more than 40% citizens of the country – our children. We need commitments from the political parties and opinion leaders to invest in children – in their rights to life and health, education and development, protection, inclusion and participation.

The Children’s Manifesto is an agenda for the future of India and its children prepared by over 1000 children from different parts of the country. A document created by children through their assessment of the nation’s performance in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), it calls upon all those who seek to represent the people to pledge themselves to key actions which can shape tomorrow’s India.

The Manifesto is focused on four thematic areas – Life and Health, Education and Development, Protection, Inclusion and Participation followed by recommendations on budget allocations to achieve these goals.
Health for all by 2000 AD is far from reality for many. Most health services do not reach people living in under-served or remote rural and tribal areas. One in every five children who die within four weeks of birth is an Indian, and one third of the world’s underweight children live in India. Three completely avoidable child deaths occur every minute. Only about one-third of Primary Health Centers (PHCs) have critical staff and supplies or offer delivery services. The Constitution of India has granted the ‘Right to Life’ as a basic human right to every citizen of India under Article 21, and this implies assurance of many basic services – but they remain a dream to most of the population, especially children.

Children Demands

• Every child should be vaccinated and immunised against vaccine-preventable diseases.
• Every pregnant mother must get proper nourishment and care.
• Every village should have a hospital with doctors and all the facilities, especially medical supplies.
• Every month a doctor should visit the local school for a medical check-up and examination of the children.
• Medical centres should be established in places where there are no hospitals to treat emergency medical needs. Mobile health services should be available. Health workers should be properly trained.
• Doctors working at the government hospitals should not be allowed to do their own private practice. Those found guilty should be punished.
• Creation of awareness among the members of the society, especially to keep the surroundings clean is very important.

EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

India has the largest number of uneducated children in the world. Two-thirds of them are girls. Over 50% of children aged six to 18 years do not go to school and only 53% of habitations have a primary school.

Government schools are catering to children from families living in poverty. Though the number of school-going children has increased the quality of learning remains low. Among children in fifth grade, 4 out of 10 cannot read at the second grade level, and 7 out of 10 cannot subtract. Children are eagerly awaiting the Right to Education Bill to become an Act so that every child between the age of 6 and 14 years has the right to free and compulsory education.

Children Demands

• Free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 18 years to be assured by law. Every village should have a school up to the class 12, with all facilities including separate and adequate toilet facilities for boys and girls in school.
• There should be one well-trained teacher for every 25 students.
• Equal education rights and opportunities for all boys and girls and children with disability. There should be no discrimination in education on the basis of appearance, poverty, caste, or religion.
• There should be a common curriculum throughout the state and children should have a choice for medium of instruction. The improvements should focus on quality in education with emphasis on sports and games.
• Free day care facilities for children after school is a must for those whose parents are working.
• Value-based education should be part of the regular curriculum to enable children to make right decisions in future.
17 million children in India work, according to official estimates. More than 53% of children in India are subjected to sexual abuse. Approximately 2 million are child commercial sex workers between the age of 5 and 15 years and about 3.3 million between 15 and 18 years. The 2001 Census of India reports that there are nearly 300,000 (three lakh) girls under 15 who have given birth to at least one child. UN figures state that 750,000 girl babies are aborted every year in India.

Children need protection when faced with situations like disasters, riots, and migration. The children are in need of protection now, more than ever.

**Children Demands**

- Children should be protected against child marriages.
- ‘Bal Mitra Police’ at village level should be formed where children can interact freely without any hesitation and fear.
- Appropriate programmes should be implemented to stop child abuse and children should be protected. Bal Adalats should be formed so that the children can get legal protection.
- People who abuse children should be punished.
- License of the doctors involved in sex determination tests should be terminated and they should be imprisoned.
- The National Child Labour Project, which is operating in only 150 districts in India, should be extended throughout the country.
- Suitable protection for pregnant mothers and infants to prevent foeticide and infanticide.
- Awareness education for all communities on issues of child abuse.

**INCLUSION & PARTICIPATION**

Equality before the Law, equal protection to all and non-discrimination is guaranteed in Articles 14, 15, 17, 25-28, 29 and 30 of the Indian constitution. According to the UN CRC, all children are equal, and have human rights, such as the right to food, shelter, health care, education and freedom from violence, neglect and exploitation. But many children are not able to participate or access facilities because of their gender or caste or disability.

**Children Demands**

- Migrant children should get all the social benefits, as they are citizens of India.
- Children should be included in all the development programmes organized by society and by the Government. In every area a special cell should be formed to look after the children’s problems.
- 18 years is the age range of childhood. This principle should be approved by all the laws.
- Government measures for child also discriminate against children. Central schools spend Rs. 11000 per year on children whereas general schools spend less that Rs. 2000 per year.
- Child rights awareness should be given to all sections of the society.
- Every child should have a birth registration certificate.
- Equal attention should be given to boys and girls.
- There should be no discrimination on the basis of colour, disability, appearance, poverty, caste, religion, etc.
All the demands above can be made reality only when it gets translated into an allocation in the budget. Every year, there is a marked neglect of allocation for children and their related issues. HAQ analysis shows that from an average of 3.10% share of the Union budget in 2000, the share of the budget for children has gone up to only 4.98% in 2008.

### Children Demands

Children demand the following allocation, so that their rights become a reality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULARS</th>
<th>OLD BUDGET (Actual allocation)</th>
<th>NEW BUDGET (Children’s demand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td>0.87 paisa</td>
<td>Rs. 4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>0.27 paisa</td>
<td>Rs. 5.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>0.06 paisa</td>
<td>Rs. 4.00</td>
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<td>Education services</td>
<td>Rs. 3.18 paisa</td>
<td>Rs. 7.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>Rs. 4.98</td>
<td>Rs. 25.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### The Process of Preparing the Manifesto

Around 200 children who were selected from World Vision children’s programmes facilitated Bal Adhikar Sabhas in the states of Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Delhi where they learnt about child rights and carried out assessments using the ‘score card’ developed by IACR. These children came together in Delhi as representatives of their peers to air their views, create this manifesto and make recommendations on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the ‘Rashtriya Bal Adhikar Sabha’ co-organized by World Vision India and the India Alliance for Child Rights held at Satyagraha Mandap, Gandhi Darshan, New Delhi on 12, 13 and 14 November, 2008.

### About India Alliance for Child Rights (IACR)

The India Alliance for Child Rights is a countrywide forum and fellowship of networks, NGOs, think tanks, activists, academia, and concerned individuals working for the realisation of the rights of all children in India. Formed in 2001, it has led major national citizens’ initiatives for alternate reporting on child rights, and for the formulation of citizens’ election manifestos on child rights. It actively engages with children and youth in the pursuit of its mandate. IACR is open to all those who subscribe to its aims and mission.

### About World Vision India

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