

Twelfth International Conference & Third World Congress

Theme: Giving Children a Voice: The Transforming Role of the Family in a Global Society

Dates: January 3rd -7th, 2009

Venue: New Delhi – India

PREAMBLE:

To grow physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually a child must essentially be happy. Every child has the right to a happy childhood, protected from all sides without any distinction or discrimination on the basis of colour, sex, religion, race, nationality or caste. Despite the fact that we come from different nations, speak different languages, practice different religions, our hearts speak as one.

Idealism is an inherent part of every child, which enables us to come up with ingenious and exemplary ideas. However, it is incomplete if we are unable to manifest it into realism. Recognizing that children all over the world are living in exceptionally difficult conditions, core issues like poverty, illiteracy, gender disparities and violence are insufficiently and ineffectively dealt with. The World Congress served as a conduct which facilitated a genesis of ideas which transcends all social, geographical, economic, religious and cultural barriers. Thus, we the Children of the World hereby declare:

RESOLUTIONS:

- Governments should pass legislations that promote and prioritize the requirements of children and childhood, in particular their education and safety, and ensure strict implementation.
- Restructuring of the syllabi to a more relevant and contemporary curriculum.
- Promotion of life skills through experiential learning and better counseling programmes.
- Devising global laws against agents of child trafficking and stricter enforcements of preventive measures such as sealing of borders, and cooperation between source countries and destination countries.
- The Governments and its allied organizations must ensure the rescue and rehabilitation of victims of child trafficking, child prostitution, sexual abuse, drug

abuse and exploitation at proper age and time.

- Functional trauma centres must be set up to give paramedical and psychological care and help to the above mentioned victims.
- Children should be totally prohibited from working in hazardous industries like mining, fireworks and heavy duty agriculture.
- In situations where children have to work to support family income, they must be above minimum 10 years of age, and their education must not be compromised
- Children need to enjoy the character, love and understanding which must therefore be brought under the auspices of his/her parents under their responsibility, in an atmosphere of compassion, moral and material security, except in certain circumstances, such as young children separated from their mothers.
- Community and public authorities must provide special care for children deprived of family and those people who lack access to subsistence living.
- More allocation of the country's GDP towards education.
- Decentralization of administration of education to ensure more accountability and regulation of quality checks.
- Revision of curriculum to include more relevant and contemporary syllabus.
- Re-orientation of textbooks to promote peace, communal harmony.
- Inclusion of value education programmes and experiential learning programmes to promote life skills.
- Encourage secular views by acknowledging diversity through celebrating all festivals and inculcating respect for all religions
- Governments should encourage respect for all religions by introducing an interpretation of all religious texts in schools thereby eradicating the misconceptions existing about all religions.

The children of the World Congress acknowledge that the above mentioned problems all stem from the vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy, deprivation and neglect, which is inescapable and cripple a child for life rendering him/ her inadequately equipped to meet the challenges of life.

The participants of the Congress have identified severing of family and community bonds along with the insufficient implementation and lack of accountability on the part of the responsible bodies, as the reasons for the perpetuation of incumbent issues like child trafficking, child labor, child prostitution, terrorism, sexual abuse, organ trade etc.

Therefore, we hope that our voice is heard, and the Governments of the world along with all

International Institutions make amends to address all problems related to children.

*Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (SERFAC), **Chennai, India**
(An International NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC of the United Nation,
New York)*

World Congress

"Giving Children a Voice: The Transforming Role of the family in a Global Society"

3-7 January, 2009.

CONCLUDING DECLARATION

(Approved at the plenary on 7 January 2009, 10.00 a.m.)

We. The 140 participants, including 33 children, from 33 countries and six religious traditions. of the 12th International conference of which this is the Third World Congress on 'Giving Children a Voice: The Transforming Role of the Family in a Global Society' organized by SERFAC (Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture) at New Delhi, on 3-7 January 2009. declare unequivocally the primacy and centrality of the Family in caring for and nurturing all children for a healthy future. We are deeply concerned to note that the functions of the family are taken over by commercial and social institutions. Therefore family is not at the centre stage of governance or policy making. We are painfully aware that the unequal distribution of power and the world's resources, ominous forces of war, terrorism, violence, globalization, migration, rapid urbanization, pollution of the environment and mind, corruption and weak governance are negatively impacting the lives of children and families. Technology which has revolutionised the century in many positive ways has also in its inappropriate use contributed to the breakdown of marriage and family leading to the de-humanisation and commodification of children through various ways including pornography and abusive images of children. Having heard the voices of children from India, Iraq, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Rwanda, Syria and United States, we are rudely awakened by their cries for care, love, justice, security and a sustainable future and a voice for them.

Recognising the importance of the Millennium Development Goals, the recommendations of the General Assembly (2006), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the two optional protocols (2006), we strongly believe that the following initiatives should be undertaken on an urgent basis to enable the family to exercise its transforming role:

1. Promote a family-based and family-centred approach to development and the empowerment of families, since large number of violations of child rights take place within the families.
2. Reflect on attitudes, belief systems and practices that require change within our own families.
3. Engage Governments, United Nations, regional bodies like SAARC Civil Society organisations. Religious institutions. Media. Private Sector. Research and Academic institutions and local communities to adopt family-centred policies and advocate the well being of families and children.
4. Advocate educational systems that promote human dignity and universal values.
5. Integrate peace and justice into the school curriculum starting with early education that draws upon the spiritual principles common to world religions.
6. Raise awareness of the public on gender-related issues and children's rights.
7. Take measures to prevent all forms of child abuse and to adopt intervention measures to assist the victims.
8. Recommend systems of restorative justice for child and youth offenders.
9. Educate children to protect themselves from abuse.
10. Protect children from the negative impact of migration through pre-departure seminars, care giving workshops and support groups for parents, guardians and other stakeholders in collaboration with non-profit organizations, church groups, and others.
11. Train children in resiliency skills to strengthen them in the face of adversity.
12. Promote responsible use of technologies, with urgent attention to the internet, television and mobile communications, based on human values, respect for self and others and child rights.
13. Search for a just world through an ongoing inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue of life.
14. Give children their own public voice through activities such as children's parliaments' and clubs, so that they also become agents of change.
15. Encourage the print and electronic media to give more space to children and their concerns through responsible programming and publication.
16. Develop holistic health care for children and families.

We strongly urge:

- Local and National Governments, the United Nations and its institutions, and International Organisations to make family and children the centre of their policy making and laws.
- Private Sector to initiate family- friendly employment policies and practices.
- Research and academic institutions to give higher priority to curriculum and research on issues related to child protection and families.
- All stakeholders including Civil Society Organisations. Non-Governmental Organisations and religious institutions to implement the initiatives suggested.
- All people to create a caring and nurturing environment conducive to the well being of family and children.

We thank and commend SERFAC for its commitment to children and family and for organising this Third world congress on 'Giving Children a Voice: The Transforming Role of the Family in a Global Society'.

We commit ourselves to an active ongoing process of listening to our children and of creating for them a more humane world.