

15<sup>th</sup> November, 2008

***Soil to School – Shiksha-Agrah – A Call to Abolish All forms of Child Labour from Agriculture, Plantation and Allied Sectors***

Honorable Shantha Sinhaji,

We are the Child Rights Concerned Citizens of the Republic and Sovereign Country - India have come together to present our views to you on how we feel about our little brothers and sisters working in agriculture and allied sectors.

We, belong to Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) spread across all the regions of India. We deliberated upon the impact of working in agriculture has on our little brothers and sisters, who should have been in schools, playing, learning and growing as much joyfully as we had done by going to school, playing and learning.

Many of us came out of the bondage of child labour, we went to the schools and learnt, played and enjoyed the right to childhood, even at the fag end of our childhood ! We now have children, and we have dreams of them becoming engineers, doctors, teachers, scientists, Abdul Kaalams, Chacha Nehrus and Kamarajars and Kalpana Chawlas. OUR children are in schools, so THEY can dream.

BUT Our little brothers and sisters working in the fields and farms and godowns/warehouses and households of the farmers suffer:

1. Heat stroke, have blistering sore feet working in paddy fields
2. Suffer servility and shouting and physical abuse and sexual abuse at the hands of the owners and supervisors, and other adult labors
3. Exposed to harmful effects of chemical pesticides suffering skin rashes, headaches, tremors, respiratory problems, muscle cramps, blurred vision, loss of co-ordination, seizures and death. We can produce testimony to these from Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and many other states. Many children migrate from Rajasthan to Gujarat to work in Hybrid Cotton Seeds fields – **Khadhi Can Turn Tainted – This is not following Khadhi Production in accordance with Bapuji's values. Let Child Labour Free Khadhi set Freedom to our children.**
4. They don't play with toys, rather their tender hands handle chillies, lentils, flowers, cooking oils, coffee beans, tea leaves.
5. We are told that the World Health Organization studied the impact of children handling chemicals, and found lowered mental ability, cognitive skills, concentration, balance and coordination in them.
6. Children working in agriculture fields, plantations and allied sectors are exposed to worst pesticides such as: endosulfan, methomyl, cypermethrin, monocrotophos, nuvacran and metasystox. It is known all over world, the impact of endosulfan has had on children of Kerala, - children being born disabled.

The State has made right to education fundamental, made it duty of every tax payer to provide financial support to education through cess, please help us make the world free from child labour –

**Make child labour a HISTORY.**

Love from Children of India