



**RESOLUTION ADOPTED TO CURB CHILD LABOUR IN THE
BT COTTON SEED FARMS,
A MEETING WITH HIS EXCELLENCY GOVERNOR OF
ANDHRA PRADESH AND DISCUSSION WITH STATE ON
OTHER CHILD RIGHTS ISSUES**



A Visit Report By:

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1. Background of the Visit

It has been an established fact that children in large numbers are used in the delicate task of pollinating the Bt. Cotton flowers in the cotton farms on account of their compatible heights and the Bt Cotton plant. The nimble and small fingers are more suited to identify the male and female cotton flowers then undertake the delicate task of pollinating the Bt cotton flowers. Large numbers of children are used in Bt Cotton fields because of the following reasons:-

- (a) It is a cheap labour available in large number;
- (b) They are non-rebellion who do not complain of being paid less;
- (c) They are must vulnerable, easy to be trafficked from these source points in Rajasthan to the cotton farms in Gujarat;
- (d) They have a flexible body which can be easily bent to move and work in cotton plants in the farmlands.

Children are used in spraying the pesticide in the Bt Cotton fields. They work in pesticide-sprayed fields and are even compelled to live in the sheds in farms. The spray used in the cotton fields cause health hazards to the children forces to work in the fields. The children engaged in the cotton farms work in inhumane conditions for more than 12 hours a day in extreme hot weather and often suffer from physical, verbal and sometimes sexual abuse. The young children- mostly girls – sacrifice their education and health to produce hybrid cottonseed for a thriving industry. The State Governments like Andhra

Pradesh and Rajasthan have accepted that child labour are rampant in cotton seed production.

The increasing incidence of child labour in Bt cotton seed production, mostly children below the age of fourteen years, has been a cause of great concern. Taking cognizance of the issue, NCPCR intervened on the issue by making constant visits to Gujarat and Rajasthan to hold discussions with the State Government as well as other stakeholders to work out a strategy for complete elimination of child labour. The Chairperson of NCPCR led a team to Gujarat on a fact finding mission in September 2007 to ascertain the extent of child labour in the Bt cotton fields. Because of prior information about the team's visit, the farmers sent back the children and they could not be found in the farms.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights continuously followed-up the issue of child labour in the Bt Cotton Seed production and the issue of trafficking of children involved in it. NCPCR commissioned a study entitled "Children migrating for work from Dungarpur district, Rajasthan to Gujarat" and the Report came up in February 2008. A report entitled "Child Labour in Cottonseed Production: A Case study of Cottonseed Farms in North Gujarat" was prepared by Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union in 2008. To bring an end to the menace of child labour in Bt Cotton farms in Rajasthan and Gujarat and assess the trafficking issue, NCPCR sent teams to Dungarpur District of Rajasthan once in May 2008 and another team during 30th June to 3rd July 2009.

NCPCR made recommendations to the State Government based on the observations during field visits. As a follow up measures of these recommendations the NCPCR led by one of its members (Dr. Yogesh Dube) visited Rajasthan from 9th -11th August 2011 to review the issues and

concerns of children migrating/ trafficked from Rajasthan (especially from Udaipur, Banswara and Dungarpur districts of Udaipur division) to Gujarat (Banaskanta, Sambarkanta and Patan districts) for working in Bt cotton farms. As it involved an inter-State matter, Dr. Yogesh Dube visited Gujarat along with the Member Secretary of NCPCR during October 2011 to assess the child labour and child trafficking situation in the Bt Cotton Seed Farms of Gujarat.

NCPCR's intervention in Gujarat and Rajasthan suggested that the Bt Cotton Seed Companies constitute a major stakeholder in eliminating the child labour. The Commission was made aware that almost all seed companies are based in Andhra Pradesh. With the objective of taking the seed companies into confidence in eliminating the child labour, the Commission had requested the Labour Department, Andhra Pradesh to organize a meeting of the various stakeholders. The meeting was held in the presence of Secretary (Labour & Employment), Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad on 21st May, 2012. The representatives of various seed associations and NGOs working on child rights issues also attended the meeting.

To facilitate a fruitful intervention by NCPCR among the concerned stakeholders, NCPCR constituted a team to visit Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The team comprised Dr. Yogesh Dube (Member, NCPCR) Dr. Ramanath Nayak (Sr. Consultant) with an objective to outline a plan of action for complete elimination of child labour in the Bt Cotton seed production.

2. Meeting with His Excellency Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan

The leader of the NCPCR team Dr. Yogesh Dube took the opportunity to meet Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan, H.E. Governor of Andhra Pradesh to share the

Commission's intervention on various issues relating child protection issues in various parts of the country. Dr. Dube also sought the direction and cooperation of His Excellency to intervene on the child rights issue in the State in general and child labour in Bt cotton sector in particular.



His Excellency Governor of Andhra Pradesh Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan with Dr. Yogesh Dube (Member-NCPDR) in Raj Bhawan, Hyderabad

During the meeting H.E. Governor Shri E.S.L. Narasimhan informed Dr. Dube that, besides the child labour in Bt Cotton Seed production, he was very concerned about the issue of female feticide, which is considered as the extreme manifestation of violence against the girl child. Stressing on the efforts required to stop the worst form of social cruelty in the present day society, he updated that the State has been implementing the Girl Child Protection Scheme (GCPS), which aims at preventing gender discrimination by empowering and protecting rights of girl child. The scheme also intends to eliminate prejudice against the girl child and encourage the girls to enroll in formal day schools; eliminate discrimination against girls in education, health and nutrition.

H.E. also impressed upon making sustained efforts to ensure protection of child rights in the State and stated that child labour should not be tolerated at all. He concluded talk with a positive note that the society is also focusing on awareness on the child right issues, parents are concerned about the education

of their children and State is serious in implementing the Right to Education Act, which can be seen as a tool to end all the other evils concerning protection of child rights.

3. Meeting of NCPCR with the Bt Cotton Seed Companies in the presence of Government of Andhra Pradesh and Representatives from Civil Societies

The meeting of NCPCR with the Bt Cotton Seed Companies was attended by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, representatives of 22 major seed companies, representatives from various associations and civil societies. The list of the participants is given in the **Annexure**.

Welcoming all the participants in the meeting, Dr. B. Kishore, the Commissioner of Labour, Andhra Pradesh, briefed on the objectives of the meeting. He also emphasized on the role of NCPCR in eradicating the Child Labour from the Bt. Cotton sector and the measures taken up by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in this regards.

Presiding over the meeting, the Principal Secretary to Government of Andhra Pradesh, Department of Labour Employment Training & Factories (Sri J.C. Sharma, IAS) urged all the Bt. Cotton Seed Companies to focus on total elimination of child labour in



Bt. Cotton Seed Production. Emphasizing on the Bt Cotton Seed Production in Andhra Pradesh, he stated that more concentration is in the Districts of Mahabubnagar and Kurnool. He further requested the participants of all Seed Companies and the Association of Bt. Cotton Seed Companies to prepare action plan for elimination of child labour in Andhra Pradesh.



Dr. Yogesh Dube, Member, NCPCR thanked the Government for organizing this workshop with Bt. Cotton Seed Companies for elimination of child labour. He informed that the Commission is seriously

concerned about the issue of employment of child labour in Bt. Cotton Seed Production in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan and has constituted a Task Force for this purpose. He shared with the participants that during his field visits to Southern Rajasthan (Dungarpur, Udaipur and Banswada districts) children were found trafficked from Rajasthan to northern Gujarat (Sabarkantha, Patan and Bansakantha districts). He further informed that the Commission has documented all the findings observed during the field visits to Rajasthan and Gujarat and rescued few children in Gujarat State and directed the concerned authority to rehabilitate them. Having said this, Dr. Dube urged every stakeholder to suggest ways and means and prepare action plan for total elimination of child labour from the Bt Cotton Seed Production in this country. He solicited the cooperation of every stakeholder to make this sector a child labour free. He clarified the Commission had been working on the issue for a long time and finally the culmination focused on Andhra

Pradesh as almost all the Bt. Cotton Seed Companies are based in A.P., though they are also operating in many other States.



The Commission not only rescued children from the Bt Cotton field but also brought these facts to the notice of Gujarat Government. Accordingly the State Government had initiated action on the recommendations of the Commission and established

seasonal Hostels for migrant children, established check posts at the Rajasthan- Gujarat border and constituted Joint Task Force. The Commission not only received complaints from various civil society groups but also observed during its field visits that large number of children are engaged in various activities of Bt. Cotton Seed farms including spray of pesticide. The migrant children (from poor families of tribal communities) are made to work for more than 12 hours a day in harsh working conditions. It has come to the knowledge of the Commission that there were some unreported deaths of children due to exposure to the chemicals. The Commission has requested the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) to study the side effects on use of pesticides in Agriculture sector, causing health hazards to the children getting exposure in the farms.

Dr. Dube further informed that the focus of NCPCR is on rescue of the children working as child labour and their enrolment in age appropriate classes through bridge schools, as it is mandatory under the Right to Education Act, 2009. The Member solicited the cooperation of every stakeholder to sensitise the society to

keep the children out of work and ensure their enrolment into the age-appropriate classes and ICDS services through Anganwadi Centres.

Dr. Ramanath Nayak (Senior Consultant- NCPCR) stated that due to the intervention of the Commission ever since 2007 the Governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat have joined hands to make the Bt Cotton seed production child labour free zones. Sensitization of community and panchayat is going on but this cannot be achieved unless the Bt. Cotton Seed Companies are taken into confidence, since most of the seed companies are based in Andhra Pradesh. It was reiterated that the Bt Cotton Production was no more seasonal activity lasting for about three months (during the Dussera and Diwali holidays) but would get extended beyond that as the children were reportedly compelled to return for Ginning work immediately after Diwali so as to claim their partial wages withhold by the farmers and contractors. Since the school going children are also being engaged by the farmers and contractors, the education of the children is effected to a large extent, as such the Bt Cotton Seed Companies were urged to enter into an agreement with the farmers to affirm that no child is engaged in any of the activities relating to the Bt Cotton production.

The Principal Secretary to Govt., WD & CW Department (Smt. Neelam Sawhaney, IAS) assured full support of her Department to the Labour Department by way of establishing ICDS Centres where working children are rampant. She further stated that nutrition programme is extended to all the schools run by the NGOs and SSA for drop out children. She informed that recently the Government has also appointed District Child Protection Officer at the district level, who would be of great help to monitor the same.

4. Views of the Representatives of Seed Companies and the Civil Society Activists

Sri G.B.Satish Kumar, AGM – Supply Chain (Cotton) of Bayer Bio-Science Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad informed that conducting awareness programmes is part of their activities and efforts are on for joining hands with other companies and monitoring employment of child as labour. He also stated that during the year 2003-04 there were child labour in this area but the incidence of child labour currently is almost nil. Taking forward this discussion Sri Mohan Rao (Monsanto India Ltd., Hyderabad) stated that they own 14000 acres of Bt. Seed Production in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan and in their field studies during the season they identified 400 children working in Bt. Cotton Production, mostly students who opt for work because of the Dussera vacation. Because of the intervention of the Company all the children were removed from employment. He felt that the incidence of child labour has drastically reduced now. The company also confirmed making available anti-venom serum in all fields to avert death due to snake bites, resulting in avoiding 25 such deaths. It was informed that human right is their concern also and they are closely working with CEASE and civil societies and audits are conducted during season of pollination by going to the field. He also stated that all Bt. Cotton Seed Production Companies are incorporating a clause in the agreement not to employ child labour and the farmers engaging child labour be penalized by not entrusting seed production. He further suggested that an independent agency may



certify Bt. Cotton Seed Production as 'Child Labour Free' to render credibility.



Sri Bhaskar, who represented the M.V. Foundation, stated that they have been working on the issues of child labour in Kurnool since last ten years. Acknowledging the efforts of the Bt Cotton Seed Companies in eliminating the child labour to some extent in terms of

numbers, he said total elimination is yet to take place. To him children in the age group 11-14 years have reduced but the number of children in the age of more than 14 years is still continuing. The Project Director, NCLP, Kurnool was of the view that bridge schools were established to rehabilitate children identified. The NGO representative stated that the Labour Department too has been conducting inspections and initiating actions against the erring employers. The Mosanto is closely working with the NGOs in Kurnool and Mahabubnagar Districts having its own rehabilitation centres.

Sri Johan Raju, Director, Child Rights Forum (CRF) and Childline, Krishna District stated that CRF is working towards eradication of child labour since 2001. During last month they identified 10 to 20 child labour with the help of Labour Department and enrolled them to the schools. The rescued children are also being presented before the CWC. He was of the opinion that the Vigilance Committees are in paper only it needs to be activated and to take up fortnightly raids by Labour Department and NGOs to identify child labour in areas like domestic service. Mr. Phillip (Chairperson, CWC, Hyderabad & representative of an NGO Divya Disha, Hyderabad) believed that there is drastic reduction in

the employment of child labour in Bt Cotton Seed Production. He advised that the seed production companies and the Labour Department should concentrate more on rehabilitation part, so that every rescued child will not go back to employment.

Sri Krishna Murthy Naidu representing CEASE endorsed the view that there is drastic reduction of child labour in A.P., the sensitization, through his experience of Bhootpur Mandal of Mahaboobnagar District.

Endorsing the views of Sri Phillip, Smt Padmavathi (Chairperson, CWC, Rangareddy District) stated orphan and semi-orphans are being engaged by farmers but their care and protection is neglected. Girl children from Thandas are still working as child labour.

Mr. Sony Kutty George, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF and in-charge of A.P. and Karnataka States stated that this region is considered as cotton seed corridor. However, he was of the opinion that age of child employees has increased and young children (below 14) are no longer working (decreased drastically) but engagement of adolescent children (above 14) are still rampant.

The Principal Secretary to Government, Department of LET & F summed up the proceedings and strongly emphasized on eliminating the child labour from every sector, be it Bt Cotton production or agriculture. “We cannot afford a single child to work or out of school, so we all must make efforts to make every sector free from child labour”, he stated. He thanked each one for taking



the initiative to hold this important consultation. He specially thanked to the Principal Secretary to Govt., Women Development and Child, Labour Department and other participants for their valuable contribution and expressed the hope that the discussion will go a long way in eradicating child labour not only from this activity but also from other process. Then he invited the NCPCR Member to move a resolution in this regard.

5. Resolutions Adopted:

After a thorough discussion on the issue of child labour in the Bt cotton seed production with the Cotton Seed Companies, the Member, NCPCR moved a motion of resolution to adopt the following:

- (i) The Bt Cotton Seed Companies shall incorporate a clause in the agreement between the Contractor and the farmer 'not to engage any child below the age of 14 years'.
- (ii) The Seed Companies shall evolve monitoring mechanism at the village level to ensure that no child is engaged, by constituting 'Village Committees' at village level.
- (iii) The Labour Department shall take necessary steps while registering the establishments to secure undertaking from the Bt Cotton Seed Companies and the Contractors ensuring that children below the age of 14 years are not engaged as workers.
- (iv) While entering into agreement the Bt Cotton Seed Companies must secure 'Self-Certification' from all farmers/employers declaring that child labour was not engaged. If any farmer/employer fails to comply with the same then Company shall initiate action against them.
- (v) The State Labour Department shall initiate measures to rescue the child labour from the Bt Cotton farms and rehabilitate them in coordination with other departments, such as Education, Social Welfare, Panchayati Raj, Police, Revenue, etc. The Government line departments shall work on concerted manner and support and coordinate each other through fortnight meetings.

- (vi) There shall be awareness programmes, involving the CWCs and the Childline.
- (vii) The child labour identified by the Labour Department, NGOs or any other organizations shall be produced before the CWC for rehabilitation.

All the participants unanimously agreed to implement the above suggestions.

LIST OF REPRESENTATIVES OF BT. COTTON SEED CO.

Sl. No.		Name & Designation of Participants	Name of the Seed Co.,
1	Mgt	M.Ramana Rao	Ganga Kaveri Seeds
2	Mgt	V.N.Bhaskar	Nath Biogenes (India) Ltd
3	Mgt	G.P.Chowdari	Nuziveedu Seeds
4	Mgt	A.Srinivasa Rao	J.K.Agri Genetics Ltd
5	Mgt	K.Sunil Kumar	Ankur Seeds Pvt Ltd
6	Mgt	P.N.Reddy	J.K.Seeds
7	Mgt	Veeresham Reddy	Palamoor Seeds
8	Mgt	K.Pradeep Kumar	Sri Satya Agri Bio Tech
9	Mgt	Y.Sudheer Kumar	HSPL
10	Mgt	P.Shiv Kumar	J.K.Agri Tech
11	Mgt	G.B.Satish Kumar	Bayer Bioscience Pvt Ltd
12	Mgt	A.D.Kumar	Vikram Seeds Ltd
13	Mgt	K.Srinivasa Rao	Prabhat Agri Bio Tech
14	Mgt	R.Kumara Krishnan	Shri Ram Bioseed Genetics (India) Ltd
15	Mgt	P.V.Sekhar	Vibha Agro Tech Ltd
16	Mgt	Y.R.Mohan Rao	Monsanto Holdings Pvt Ltd
17	Mgt	G.V.Raghu Ram	Advanta India Ltd
18	Mgt	C.R.Kulkarni	Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co.
19	Mgt	K.Narendra Babu	Amar Biotech Ltd
20	Mgt	G.Babu	Kaveri Seeds Co. Ltd
21	Mgt	M.Mahesh Kumar	Tulasi Seeds Pvt Ltd
22	Mgt	V.S.Raja	Seed Works International Pvt Ltd
23	Mgt	R.Jayasankar	Xylem Seeds Pvt Ltd
24	Mgt	G.Rama Krishna	Namdhari Seeds Pvt Ltd
25	Mgt	R.Tirupathi Naidu	Wallaz, Aurangabad

LIST OF PROJECT DIRECTORS, NCLP

Sl. No.		Name of Project Director	Districts
1	NCLP	P. Sudhakar Rao	Nizamabad
2	NCLP	Mohammed Abdul Waheed	Adilabad
3	NCLP	V. Mohan Kumar(Field Officer)	Warangal
4	NCLP	B. Anjaiah	Karimnagar
5	NCLP	I. Venkateshwarlu	Guntur
6	NCLP	Srinivas	Mahbubnagar
7	NCLP	N.Md. Isaq	Kurnool
8	NCLP	Dr. K. Sudhakar Reddy	Rangareddy
9	NCLP	K. Leelavathi	Khammam

LIST OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NGOs

Sl. No.	Name & Designation of Participants	Name of the NGO Organisation
1	NGO Narava Prakasa Rao	Balavikas Foundation, Visakhapatnam
2	NGO B.Krishna Murthy Naidu	CEASE
3	NGO P.John Raju	Child Line, Vijaywada
4	NGO M.Raja Sekhar	District Manager, UNICEF, Kurnool
5	NGO J.Bhaskar	Co-Ordinator, MV Foundation
6	NGO I.Phillips	Director, Divya Disha
7	NGO Mrs.T.Padmavathi	Chair Person, Child Welfare Committee, Ranga Reddy
8	Assn R.Rama Rao	Executive Member, AP Seedsmen Assn.,