

Dear Shri Singh,

This is in continuation of my visit, along with the team of experts viz. Dr. Neera Burra and Shri Venkat Reddy, to Gujarat from 17th to 20th September 2007. During our visit, we have noted that several hundreds and thousands of children migrate to Gujarat from Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh to join the labour force. It seems that they are preferred because they are a source of cheap labour and can be forced to work for long hours unquestioningly.

Although we have not come across a single child during our visit to Banaskantha District, there is sufficient evidence from the statements of farmers, whom the Commission met during the visit. They mentioned that children were working for them and they pleaded that the Commission should give time until next season for making arrangements to replace child labour. They even stated that if children were totally removed from labour force they would run into huge losses and so asked the Commission not to enforce any Law this season. During the testimonies of children and NGOs, we also came to know that a large number of children were employed in the cotton ginning mills, saltpan industries, brick-kiln industry, charcoal industry and so on. Their migration into Gujarat, we were told would start from October soon after monsoons and would continue until February.

As you know, the Commission is deeply concerned about the plight of children in the country and would like to ensure that all steps are taken to rescue them from labour force and mainstream them into schools. In this regard, the Government of Gujarat may implement the following at the earliest:-

- Give wide publicity through posters on the Child Labour (Protection & Regulation) Act, 1986 and announce that the Government would take serious action against the employers violating the Act.
- Ensure the functioning of the District Task Force and systematically review the action taken by them for abolition of child labour.
- Conduct inspections for detection of child labour in a manner that children become visible and are not hidden. From the details of inspection provided by the Gujarat Commissioner of Labour, it seems that they have not been able to trace even a single child during their raids and inspections. There seems to be a need to devise a different strategy for identifying such children, collaborate with local NGOs and trade unions if we are really serious about rescuing them from the labour force. Kindly intimate the action taken for a more innovative strategy to identify children and rescue them.
- There is evidence of migration of children from the tribal areas within Gujarat as child labour. The programme of seasonal hostels initiated by the Government needs to be taken to scale to cover all the children. Further, there is a need to ascertain that the eligibility criteria for admission into such hostels is flexible enough to ensure access to such children.
- Finally, there has to be a protocol of action that have to be followed for identification, rescue and rehabilitation of children till they reach their

homes and are sent to schools. There is a role for all the concerned Departments in this regard. It will be useful to have a roadmap that lays down the responsibilities at each stage. This may be sent to the Commission.

I thank you for the discussions and look forward for hearing from the Gujarat Government on the above issues. The Commission would also be interested in facilitating a meeting of all the concerned officers from Rajasthan and Gujarat some time in January 2008 to review the efforts and coordinating their action to abolish child labour.

With

Yours sincerely,

(Shantha Sinha)

Shri Gurcharan Singh,
Principal Secretary (Labour),
Government of Gujarat,
Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat.

C.C. **Ms Manjula Subramanyam,** Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat, Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat.

(Shantha Sinha)
Chairperson

