

**Public declaration of creation of
Child Labour Free Zones in Tirupur
&
Statelevel Consulation on stepping stones for Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ)**

**By
SAVE, Tirupur, Tamilandu**

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Venue: Manchester Hall, Hotel Velan, Tirupur



The people of 16 and 17th ward formally declared Pandiyan Nagar and Annanagar in Tirupur as Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZ). Child Labour Free Zones are geographical areas where no distinction is made between different forms of child Labour and where all children are withdrawn from labour and reenrolled into formal schools to help them continue their education. The declaration was made at a function organised at Hotel Velan, Tirupur on December 28, 2016. A short film on the Child Labour Free Zones of Pandiyan Nagar and Annanagar was screened on the occasion following which the declaration was made.



Dignitaries present on the occasion included Dr. R. Chinnaswamy, Deputy Commissioner of Police (HQ) Tirupur, Mr. M. Udhayakumar M.P Dindigul Constituency, Mr. N. Chandran, Chairman, Eastman Global Clothing Pvt. Ltd., Mr. Dhanapal, K.P.R. Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore, Mr. Muthurathinam, TEAMA Tirupur. Also present on the occasion were members of the

Community, Child Rights Protection Forum, NGOs, CBOs, Teachers and SAVE team who contributed in making SAVE's Vision of Child labour free Zones a reality. Ms. Viyakula Mary, Executive Director of SAVE welcomed the dignitaries and guests.



Mr. A. Aloysius, Managing Director of SAVE in his welcome address said, that from his point of view today is an important day for Tirupur and it was a matter of pride to be part of the celebrations. Welcoming Mr. R. Chinnaswamy he said that apart from he being a very respected Police Officer, his immense contributions to child welfare has made Tirupur a safer place for children. Welcoming Mr.

Chandran, Mr. Aloysius said that his presence proved that there are good companies that look after the interests of children. He further said it was a matter of regret that even after 60 years of independence we have still have child labour. Elaborating further on why Pandiyan Nagar and Annanagar were chosen for the creation of child labour free zones, this was as the 2 wards had 100 % of working community and the highest concentration of child labour mostly migrant. In conclusion he thanked the communities, house owners, merchants, companies for their valuable cooperation / contributions in enabling the 2 wards to be free of child labour.



Delivering the Keynote Address on the occasion Dr. Chinnaswamy, DCP said that he with one hand holding a stick and the other hand holding a gun chasing criminals, looking at everyone with suspicion to be given this privilege of being the chief guest and to deliver the key note address was a great honor. He felt that NGOs could ideally compliment the work of the Police department. He further added that society looks at children through a narrow prism that is a child should either be in school or working, so we are in a way to be blamed for the continued existence of child labour. He wanted to know how many of us when we see children scavenging for a living have asked the child why he/she are scavengers, most of us would have just walked past ignoring the child, is this because we feel it is all right as long as the child is not begging for a living or is it sheer indifference since that child is in no way connected with us.

Dr. Chinnaswamy further went on to ask does child labour exist because it was decreed by God or is there a government order to that effect, neither of the two he said that poverty was the root and the other being a lack of interest in educating the child. He further added that any parent eating out of his / her child's labour should be ashamed, nobody can decide what one is going to be after 40 years but a stitch in time could have made a child labour either a scientist or an entrepreneur. He further added that there is no such thing as an orphan child as anyone can develop new relations, all a child needs to be an asset to society is access to food, shelter and education.



Children if not shown the proper path are bound to go astray and become anti social elements or criminals. Poverty should not be a reason for the child to be denied of his/her rights. In conclusion he said that 2 child labour free zones is but a step for SAVE and they should work to ensure that Tirupur District as a whole is declared as a child labour free district and that will surely make the whole world to sit up and

take notice. Mr. Chandran, Chairman, Eastman Global in his address said that if children are not given the proper protection in their formative years they are bound to go wrong. He was effusive in his praise of Mr. Aloysius for his unwavering dedication in eradication of child labour. He said that child labour as such was eradicated a long time back but it is again back in the limelight due the presence of a large migrant child population. His earnest wish was that Mr. Aloysius will work on this issue and Eastern Global and other like minded companies will help SAVE in their endeavors. Mr. Chandran in conclusion said that he will give all the support that is needed by SAVE to maintain the 2 wards as child labour free zones especially migrant children's education.

Mr. Udhayakumar M.P, Dindigul constituency in his address praised the efforts of Mr.



Aloysius and SAVE in their work on eradication of child labour. He said that Tirupur is in a position to offer employment to people looking for work, this at times results in good deeds going wrong as in this case where children are employed. Article 24 of the constitution states that anyone below the age of 16 years is deemed to be a child and the Late Chief Minister Dr. J. Jayalalitha was committed to the

welfare and protection of the girl child. He further elaborated on the various activities initiated over the years by the State government on the eradication of Child labour in the State.



Mr. Muthurathinam of TEAMA (Tirupur Export And Manufacturing Association) in his address said that if there was an organisation working for the eradication of child labour in Tirupur it has to be SAVE. The organisation has been instrumental in reducing the number of child labourers in particular tailoring which attracts a large number of children. He further said that TEAMA will extend all help to SAVE in their endeavors on eradication of child labour.

The Best Awardees





Awards were presented to Mr. J. Joseph, Headmaster, Elementary School, Mr. S. Ponnusamy Government High School, Mr. G. Balakrishna, Correspondent, Saradha Vidhyalaya Matric. Higher Secondary School, Naam Narpanimandram, a Community Based Organisation(CBO) for their invaluable contributions in establishing the CLFZ at Pandiyan Nagar.

Accountability towards Child Labour free Zone

Members of the Child Protection Forum were presented on stage and were given a standing ovation for their work in establishing the child labour free zone in Pandiyan Nagar and Annanagar. Mr. Krishnan Secretary CRPF highlighted the activities of CRPF.

Mr. Joseph, Head Master, Elementary School said in his address, standing ovation truly begins to SAVE for their work in eradicating child labour. His interactions with SAVE goes back 15 years and this has culminated in Pandiyan Nagar being declared a child labour free zone where all children are in school exercising their right to education. He further added that his students felt that they were equal to students in private schools. His school conducts regular parents meeting and conducts yoga and computer trainings.



Mr. Krishnan, CRPF President in his address said that in a District which is famous for child labour, SAVE chose to work for eradication of child labour in Pandiyan Nagar and Annanagar why ? The answer to it is that these 2 wards have the largest concentration of child labourers in the district. While others spoke about eradication of child labour, we can proudly say that there are no child labourers in our ward now. We feel proud to be in this zone. It will continue by us.

Mr. Emmanuel a CRPF member said he was proud to be associated with SAVE in their work on eradication of child labour. He said that he felt that he was in the right place and whenever he required it he always given guidance by Mr. Aloysius, Ms. Mary and Mr. Francis.

Similarly all the CRPF members shared their experiences with the guests on the occasion.

Following this the members of child Parliament were presented on stage and were praised for their role in ensuring the right to education for children and involving themselves in community affairs.

Break for lunch

A cultural dance was performed by V. Karthika and T. Karthika and the gathering enjoyed every moment of it.

Business and Child Labour Free Zone

Following the dance Mr. Aloysius welcomed Mr. Dhanapal of K. P. R. Mills, Mr. Subramanian of Austor Muller and Mr. Thomas of Eastman Global to the dais.

Mr. A. Subramaniam, Austor Muller Shoes in his address said that everyone was aware for the need to eradicate child labour, yet SAVE was the one who worked on it, a work that should have been the responsibility of the Government, it was SAVE that was handpicked to deliver and they lived up to the expectations. It was SAVE that brought the issue of child labour to the world's attention.

He further added that he had no words to express his appreciation for the work done by SAVE. To check whether what he was hearing was true, he visited a tea shop and enquired about the sticker campaign carried out by SAVE, the shop owner went on to say that he was not only aware of the campaign but if the Outreach worker Kalavathi chose to contest the ward councilors post they will work for her victory, this statement he said reflected the work carried out by SAVE.



completing their education.

Mr. Dhanapal of K. P. R. Mills had this to say “Encouraging child labour will only affect the future of children in the long run, but encouraging children to exercise their right to education will usher in a bright future for children”. He further elaborated his company’s contribution in educating workers who had dropped out of school. His organization has promoted workers to higher posts on

Mr. Thomas of Eastman Global had this to say, a step requires a lot of bricks to construct similarly all present here are the bricks on which a foundation has been laid to eradicate child labour.

He said that SAVE’s work on eradication of child labour will change the face of Tirupur, what you have achieved today is only the fore runner to more important work, I would like to wish you success in your future endeavors in this field – his personal contribution in eradication of child labour was the adoption of a girl and a boy coming from impoverished families.

Child Labour Free Zone and Education System

Mr. Aloysius then welcomed Dr. Lovelina, Dr. Mohan Kumar, Ms. Jothy Susila and Subramaniam Bharathi to the Dias.

Dr. Lovelina, Bharathiyar University in her address expressed her gratitude for having given been given an opportunity to speak. She and her colleagues were academicians and to be invited to be part of this declaration was a privilege. She said poverty and lack of education contributed to child labour, so this makes the initiative of SAVE all the more important as it not only looks at eradication of child labour but also it looks at their education.

Mr. Mohan Kumar, Chikkannna College said that today so many government schemes on education were available, like scholarships, laptops, bus pass for students without discrimination. Students can be well educated and achieve good positions and improve their economic status. Students have access to quality education and teaching which children of yester years did not have, so they should make the most of it.

Ms.Jyothy Sushila, Integrated child Development Scheme, The children from 2-5 are taken care in the aspect of physical, mental and psychological growth under the scheme. The staff of the ICDS is concentrating more to bring all the children into this system.

Mr.Subramani Barathi, Writer,said that he has been associated with the child labour program for over 15 years he further added that he has written books related to child labour and the Noyal river pollution. He is very happy to be associated with SAVE on eradication of child labour. As a resident of the 16th ward, he feel proud and he witnessed the programme for all the years of SAVE as well in the Zone for eradication of Child labour.



Valedictory Session

Mr. Aloysius then welcomed Mr. Raja Shanmugam of TEA, Mr. Siva of SIVA Trust, Mr. Varun Nair of SCM, Mr. Sharma, Mr. Felix Jeyakumar, Ms. Subhadra and Dr. Rukmani Rao to the dais.



Mr. Raja Shanmugam, president of Tirupur Export Association said what was once a cottage industry in Tirupur has developed into a huge industry and has made Tirupur the global supplier it is today. Tirupur does not distinguish between employer and employee for here today's employee can be tomorrow's employer. Given this child labour was inevitable for most of them start home based units as money is not a

major factor in setting up home based units. What is praise worthy about SAVEs efforts was that they chose ward 16 and 17 as the ward has the largest child labour population in Tirupur. TEA itself has receive a lot of complaints on child labour and they have also been closely monitoring the situation, however a continues effort has to be maintained if the success of today has to be maintained. He wished SAVE the very best of luck.

Mr. Siva, Worst Form of Child Labour Forum said that a concentrated effort over 2 years resulted in the 2 wards being declared as child labour free zones. A lot of people were

involved on the December 28 declaration on children, he further added that there was a pressing need for the creation of CLFZs in other districts for we still look at 16 year olds as children. He was lavish in his praise for KPR Mills efforts in educating their workers, he said that awareness should be created at source districts and recruitment under schemes should be avoided.

Mr. Siva introduced the panel members Mr. Varun, Manjari in Rajasthan, Ms. Subhadra, Fair labour Association in Bangalore, Dr. Rukmani in Hyderabad women and child rights – aborting foetus and abandoning babies Children At Risk (CAR) network –and Mr. Felix , Child Right protection Forum for Girl Children-CRF(G) in.

Mr. Varun on his part congratulated SAVE for making ward 16 and 17 as a child labour free zones. He himself works on child labour in the stone quarries of Rajasthan but for CLFZs in the stone quarries of Rajasthan to be a reality one will have to overcome numerous hurdles. He however would like to replicate SAVEs model in Rajasthan and he felt that this model can be replicated in other parts of the globe particularly in Africa. He also said that child labour free zones can als be known as child friendly zones, he concluded by congratulating SAVE once again.

Ms. Subhadra who works for FLA in Bangalore was all praise for the children in making CLFZ a reality, she was particularly impressed by the unity amongst the various people involved in the program. Ms. Subadhra who works on child rights and labour felt that SAVE's CLFZ model can be replicated in the Agra shoe industry which is notorious for using child labour, it's a city where one can see thousands of children perched on roof tops working on shoe uppers and lowers since this industry is mostly home based. ICW should strengthen laws on child labour in particular at the home based units and she once again congratulated SAVE for a work very well executed.



Dr. Rukmani, Giramiya, CAR Network asked the gathering to give a round of applause for the children. She then congratulated SAVE and everyone else involved in the creation of

CLFZ at the 2 wards. She works in the rural areas of Telengana on Child labour in the agriculture sector. She started with 12 villages and now covers over 200 villages, child labour here is mostly used in cotton fields and she uses an area based approach by involving schools in enrollment of children, campaigns on the discrimination of girls in education, boys being educated at the expense of girls. She campaigned and petitioned the government for the construction of more girls hostels so more girls can access education, she succeeded in her efforts and today more girls have access to education. She was partially successful in getting the government to address the poor teacher to student ratio. She also felt that the government has not paid sufficient attention to the education of the poorest of poor children and tribals. The migration of people to Telengana is more or less similar to the situation prevailing in Tirupur.

The recruitment of child labour is different in the sense there the house owner recruits children staying in his house and acts as the go between the worker and the buyer. The local buyer in turn hands over the produce to the exporter who in turn sends it to the buyer, so it is difficult to trace the buyer, however MVI did a research and came up with a few Buyers names based in The Netherlands and other parts of the world, these buyers when contacted quietly moved their activities to other States mostly Jharkand. Today there are many well meaning individuals working on the employment of adolescent girls in the cotton industry, they have to be given legitimacy. She concluded by congratulating SAVE and Team and the learnings will be taken in the network of Child At Risk(CAR) .

Mr.S.Felix Jeyakumar, State coordinator, Child Right Forum for Girl Children-CRF(G) in his very brief speech said that the gathering were the true stars and The learning from SAVE to create CLFZ inspired us and this learning will be taken and facilitation and guide will be sought from them. He spoke about his efforts on the eradication of child labour especially girl children in Tamil Nadu.

Mr. Joseph Thomas, SCL-India Platform, Programme Manager from ICCO proposed the vote of thanks. He thanked everyone who made this event successful.He said while different participants chose different approaches and sectors they had one common goal that was to eradicate child labour. He thanked and praised everyone involved for their efforts in eradicating child labour.

