



NATIONAL DECLARATION PLAN FOR EVERY CHILD LEAVE NO CHILD OUT/BEHIND

India is home to the world's second largest population of children, who are entitled to enjoy their rights and realise their full potential as they develop and grow. The constitutional commitment to every child reflects our obligations enshrined in the UNCRC and other international and regional human rights treaties. Over the past decades, significant efforts have been made to create and uphold protective frameworks and mechanisms to ensure that every girl and boy in India reaches adulthood as respected, responsible and self-reliant citizens.

However, despite all these efforts and investments, much more remains to be done. Millions of children are still living out their childhood on the streets, trapped in child labour, married off early or trafficked and lured into commercial sexual exploitation. Millions more are targets of criminal activities and suffer the consequences of harmful practices, resulting in numerous and multiple deprivations of their rights to protection, education, health and other basic quality services.

The root causes underlying the adversities affecting children are manifold, complex and interlinked. This ranges from chronic and extreme poverty, to inconsistent implementation and enforcement of the existing laws, to lack of access to services and opportunities. Resolving this will ensure that every child not only survives, but also thrives and can contribute towards a better society.

Responding to the urgency of the situation of millions of children deprived of their optimal development, this Declaration calls upon all stakeholders, including the national and state governments, civil society, communities, private sector, media, academia and each one of us, to join hands. Let us intensify our efforts to prevent and eliminate any situation in which children fail to reach the potential to which they are entitled.

To achieve our constitutional ideals and meet our international commitments, all stakeholders are called on to work together more effectively to provide a nurturing environment for every girl and boy in India, based on the principles of non-discrimination, development and the best interest of the child.

Specifically, we declare that:

1. Children enjoy their own **rights**, and are entitled to be involved in their own development and protection. Conscious efforts are needed to recognise, nourish and encourage the agency of children by everyone, including parents and families, communities and government.
2. We declare that efficient **collaboration** needs to be intensified to implement the existing laws and policies with utmost consistence and without delay. Whilst accountability should be owned by the government, it must be shared with civil society actors, media and private sector, among others. All stakeholders need to accelerate their mobilisation and coordination for meaningful law enforcement, while taking collective action to measure progress made in bringing lasting changes in the lives of children.

3. We declare that more focus should be placed on **research** and creation of an evidence base to inform and guide planning and implementation of interventions by government agencies and civil society actors. Data collection and information management systems should be strengthened to assist analysis of the situation of children and provide forward looking and innovative solutions based on policies and regulatory frameworks.
4. We declare that more investment in affirmative action should be made to eliminate the difficult circumstances children, especially girls find themselves in. This is imperative to prevent the high cost of violence against children that society ends up paying. As a large number of children remain out of safety nets, it becomes our collective responsibility to increase investments to prevent and respond to hardships stemming from multiple complex and interlinked causes. Thus the collective commitment for increasing budgeting for children should be reinforced and translated into reality.
5. We declare that action based **networking** should bring all stakeholders together to ensure coordination, joint accountability, effective communication and clear division of roles and responsibilities. This will improve the functioning of law enforcement and related legal services, community based actions and policy reforms.
6. We declare that promising and innovative practices that demonstrate feasibility should be scaled up. Building upon existing knowledge, will further contribute to expanding safety nets to cover and involve as many children as possible.

As stated by the UN, “We must work closely together to make this year a year of global action, one that will be remembered as the dawn of a new era of sustainable development”. We reaffirm our action to work on SDGs and track their development to further the cause, one that includes children’s voices being reflected through child led evaluation.

India being the youngest nation, its youth will be one of the most prevalent populations benefiting from the SDGs in the time to come - so let us work with young people now to achieve the positive changes we want in India.

Plan India reaffirms its commitment to continue to strive to improve the situation of children in difficult circumstances. We will continue to collaborate with regions, states and all organisations who have been part of this process and together we will positively impact the lives of millions of children.