

Dear Friends,

Greeting from the Concerned for Working Children.

We have some good news to share with you.

We have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Parliamentary Committee. Please find here, the link to the announcement by Ms. Linda Hofstad Helleland, Member of the Parliament, Norway. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTTi4-CMcds>

This has come to us as a surprise and it still has not sunk in.....

The credit goes to our primary constituency and partners – working children – and the many battles they have fought in numerous forums at home and around the world for their voices to be heard. Their struggle has always been a peaceful one and now one of patience as they continue their crusade in an environment that not only does not recognise them as workers, but has criminalised their work.

We have a long way to go and so much more needs to be done. Children's democratic participation and their right to determine the course of their lives – the present and future – by transforming the past and making choices is barely recognised in the letter. In practice it is largely believed that using compulsion to make children 'participate' in services that are provided – be it health care or education – without allowing children to determine the nature and quality of these services, is a fulfilment of children's rights. We, adults by and large, still think that we know what is best for children and that children don't.

We, as an organisation have always celebrated small victories, but this is a huge leap for the cause. It is a recognition of Children's' Right to Participation, one of the most fundamental rights enabling an individual to determine the path of their existence.

We are a small organisation and yet we have managed to impact on child rights policy and programming both locally and globally, bringing the right to children's participation and self-determination centre stage. This nomination is in itself a great honour.

We could not have done this without the support of so many of you around the world who have contributed to our vision and strategies and given us the strength to pursue our goals. You have also at times been our severest critics and we appreciate your inputs and involvement in this cause.

On behalf of the children we work with and all our colleagues at the Concerned for Working Children we thank you all and look forward to your continued support and involvement in this cause.

With warm regards,

Damodar Acharya
Executive Director
Development

Nandana Reddy
Director



Nandana Reddy founder Executive Director
Concerned for Working Children, Bangalore

The Concerned for Working Children, India, has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2012, by three members of the Norwegian Parliament, Linda Hofstad Helleland, Gunn Karin Gjul and André Oktay Dahl. In their nomination letter sent to the Nobel Committee, they have written, "Since 1980, Concerned for Working Children (CWC) has contributed to several initiatives with such children's rights organisations as Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayats (children's councils) in the state of Karnataka in India to strengthen the influence of children. The organisation and its network have been pioneers in children's participation within research, public planning, youth democracy, media and other areas. Few, if any, other local organisations elsewhere have contributed as much to this work. CWC is also an active contributor in the joint international work for the improvement of children's participation".

The nomination by the Norwegian parliamentarians is for three organisations that promote the rights of children, Concerned for Working Children, Save the Children, and UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund). Their formal letter ends with these lines, "An award to these three organisations would greatly contribute to a much-needed increase in the worldwide focus and attention on the children's right to participation."

Since the last three decades, The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) has been working in partnership with children from the most marginalised communities, especially working children, to realise their rights, with emphasis on their right to participation in decision making processes.

Since 1980, CWC has contributed to various initiatives towards building several child-led organisations, starting with Bhima Sangha, the first ever children's own organisation in Asia, by empowering the working children in Karnataka to raise their voice demanding for the realisation of all their rights, without conditionalities. CWC has also been facilitating organisations of school-going children and children of migrant communities in coastal Udupi district, in Bellary district and in Bangalore city, Karnataka, India.

That Bhima Sangha spearheaded children's protagonism in Asia and paved the way in the region for the creation of spaces for children to participate in decision making processes, from local to the international level is globally recognised.

CWC has advocated for children's citizenship and facilitated them to form their own councils, Makkala Panchayats, and conduct the first ever children's own Grama Sabha, as early as 2002, through which children held their local governments accountable. The Makkala Panchayats enabled sustained engagement of children with the local governance processes and the children's Grama Sabhas, have clearly been an affirmation that children are citizens of today and demonstrate the importance of children's participation in upholding and nurturing democracy. Today, the State of Karnataka has made children's Grama Sabhas mandatory in all its 5600 rural Local Governments.

CWC and its various networks have facilitated children to be pioneers in areas of child-led research and information management, where children own their own information; public planning; social mobilisation such as campaigns against child marriages, media advocacy and policy advocacy. It not only advocates for children's rights in all policy discourses, but also enables the participation of children in such decision making process to ensure their view points get the attention they deserve.

In all these processes, the involvement of children, their enthusiasm, their unerring sense of justice and their compassionate response to people's problems have drawn many supportive adults into the process.

CWC, in partnership with organisations around the world is engaged in building capacities of children to realise their right to participation and in enabling adults in developmental organisations, academic institutions, UN agencies, international donor agencies and governments to create an environment that recognises and enables children's Right to Self Determination. For instance it has provided assistance to the Government of Mongolia and the Government of Sweden to develop their strategies to work with children. It has worked in countries such as Zambia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, Japan to name a few, to advocate for children's right to participation.

Accepting this nomination with gratitude, CWC states, "The credit goes to our primary constituency and partners – working children – and the many battles they have fought in numerous forums at home and around the world for their voices to be heard. Their struggle has always been a peaceful one and now one of patience as they continue their crusade in an environment that not only does not recognise them as workers, but has criminalised their work.

We have a long way to go and so much more needs to be done. Children's democratic participation and their right to determine the course of their lives – the present and future – by transforming the past and making choices is barely recognised in the letter. In practice it is largely believed that using compulsion to make children 'participate' in services that are provided – be it health care or education – without allowing children to determine the nature and quality of these services, is a fulfilment of children's rights. We, adults by and large, still think that we know what is best for children and that children don't.

We, as an organisation have always celebrated small victories, but this is a huge leap for the cause. It is a recognition of Children's' Right to Participation, one of the most fundamental rights enabling an individual to determine the path of their existence.

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Nomination of Nobel Peace Prize Laureates 2012

It is a great privilege for us to nominate three organizations who work to promote the rights of children: Concerned for Working Children (CWC), Save the Children, and UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund), as Nobel Peace Prize Laureates for 2012.

On November 20th 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the first international human rights convention to provide children with a specific legal status: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is founded on three fundamental principles: protection, provision and participation. The first two of these – protection and provision – have, however, been afforded far more attention than the third, participation. UNICEF received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 for its worldwide work to help children in need.

Participation, the child's right to express his or her views in all matters affecting the child, has however not been given the same attention by the international community. All except two UN member states have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are therefore great opportunities for all countries to improve and strengthen their work to involve children.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states the following:
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION - The child has the right to express his or her views in all matters affecting the child, and the child's views shall be given their due weight.

The different parties shall guarantee that children who are capable of forming their own point of view are ensured the right to freely express their opinion in all matters concerning the individual child. The views of the child shall be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

For this purpose children are to be given the specific opportunity to be heard in every legal or administrative case involving the individual child, either personally, through a representative or through another suitable body pursuant to case management procedures of national law.

The acknowledgement of a child's right to freedom of expression and opinion, and their participation in decision-making procedures adjusted to their ability is of great value to the individual child, the family, the community, the school, the state and democracy in general. The fact that children are a particularly vulnerable and exposed group, especially in times of war and other crisis, is an additional justification for listening to and considering their points of view. Through the involvement of children in democratic procedures, not only do we safeguard the interest of the child, but we also educate future adults in democratic processes and how to be conscious citizens. When the interests of children are given due weight the potential for war and conflict decreases. The child's right to participation applies to the family, the school, the workplace, child services, healthcare and legal processes. Children also have the right to participate in both local and national political decision-making processes.

Save the Children defines itself as an organization that advocates the rights of children. Save the Children's vision is of a world where every child has the right to survival, protection, personal development and participation. Since its foundation in 1919, the organization has advocated the interests of children worldwide. Furthermore, it has promoted the ability of children to express their opinions.

UNICEF is the world's largest organization that advocates the rights of children. UNICEF was founded in 1946 to help children who were victims of the Second World War. It has since expanded its mandate and to the present day has helped over 25 million children worldwide. The organization contributes in many countries to the empowerment of children and their ability to state and claim their own interests via such different channels as programs for youth dialogue, leadership training and the development of national development plans.

Since 1980, Concerned for Working Children (CWC) has contributed to several initiatives with such children's rights organizations as Bhima Sangha and Makkala Panchayats (youth councils) in the state of Karnataka in India to strengthen the influence of children. The organization and its network have been pioneers in children's participation within research, public planning, youth democracy, media and other areas. Few, if any, other local organizations elsewhere have contributed as much to this work. CWC is also an active contributor in the joint international work for the improvement of children's participation.

An award to these three organizations would greatly contribute to a much-needed increase in the worldwide focus and attention on the child's right to participation.

Yours faithfully

Linda Hofstad Helleland
Member of the Norwegian Parliament

Gunn Karin Gjøl
Member of the Norwegian Parliament

André Oktay Dahl
Member of the Norwegian Parliament