

National Children's Fair

10-11 September 2001, Kathmandu, Nepal

A National Children's Fair was held on the 10-11 September 2001 under the aegis of Save the Children Alliance and the Child Clubs Consortium at Kathmandu. Save the Children is actively involved in activities concerning the Global Movement for Children (GMC) and the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). The main objective of the Children's Fair was to bring together representatives of child groups



from all the development regions of Nepal, and facilitate their interaction with the Nepalese delegation to the Special Session, government officials, political leaders, representatives from various I/NGOs, the media and the corporate sector. The interaction appraised the Nepalese delegation about the perspectives and priority issues concerning Nepalese children so that their views could be presented at the Special Session. The fair also sought to inform the people about the state of children in Nepal.

Temba Tshiri Sherpa, the youngest climber to scale the Everest, inaugurated the fair. More than 150 children representing the five regions of the country participated in the fair. Participants from remote districts such as Mugu, Achham and Doti found their way to the fair undeterred by the distance and difficulties. Children from marginalized communities such as former Kamaiya (bonded labour), dalit (socially oppressed due to caste discrimination) and Bhutanese refugees also participated in the fair.



The children interacted with the Nepalese delegates to the UN Special Session, government officials, media, and the general public and made them aware of the perspectives of the children of Nepal. They also made important suggestions to the

Nepalese delegates to the Special Session on viable approaches to address the issues. The participants are active members of various child groups advocating the cause of child rights, such as equitable education, protection of dalit children, promotion of the rights of refugee children, combating HIV/AIDS and elimination of child trafficking in Nepal.

The children organized a press interaction program on the eve of the Fair. Answering queries from the journalists a child from a Ilam, a hilly district in eastern Nepal, said, *"Equal and quality education for every child, elimination of all kinds of social discrimination, child participation, and protection of children from maltreatment are the major issues and concerns of Nepalese children"*. Another child from Dhanusha, a terai district in southern Nepal poignantly asked, *"Why doesn't the media give priority to children's issues?"* A day before the actual commencement of the fair, children discussed various issues, major concerns and key messages.



Thirty-four stalls were set up at the fair consisting of five from the regions and twenty-nine others representing different themes/issues. The fair received approximately ten thousand visitors, mostly school children. Besides the stalls that were the major attractions of the fair, there were also special events such as:

- Children's caucuses on a variety of subjects such as corporal punishment, birth registration, children's rights to participation and children's rights vis-a-vis responsibilities.
- Discussions with fellow school students visiting the fair on varied topics like children's rights, participation and role of child clubs.
- Theatrical performances, video-shows, song-renditions etc.

It became evident through the views expressed by the participants that besides some common problems prevalent throughout the country, the regions are beset with problems peculiar to their respective regions. For instance, children from the inner terai raised the issue of birth registration rights and the problems faced by inadvertently unregistered children at the time of getting school enrolment. Children from the far-western region highlighted on rampant caste discrimination in their region due to which the dalit children are bereft of the opportunity to attend school. The group of disabled children drew the attention of the audience

to their pathetic plight caused by their physical impairment coupled with social discrimination. The Bhutanese refugee children shared their sense of grief at having to live away from their birthplace. The children belonging to former bonded laborers (kamaiya) spoke about their struggle for the barest minimum needs of life.

The children's interaction with the Nepalese delegates to the UN Special Session was one of the major events during the fair. Honorable Member of National Planning Commission Dr. Nirmal Prasad Pandey and Officiating Secretary in the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhandari took part in the interactive session on behalf of the Nepalese government delegation. Issues and concerns adversely affecting the children of Nepal were raised and discussed at the session. "The children offered very constructive recommendations and the outcome of the interaction was fruitful for the Nepalese delegation," said Dr. Pandey. Mr. Bhandari emphasized on the wholehearted contribution of every citizen to realize the commitments to children.

The Global Movement for Children is being carried out in Nepal as in the rest of the world with great success. Save the Children Alliance, Unicef Country Office and Plan International together with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare are spearheading the activities related with GMC and UNGASS in Nepal. Various I/NGOs, community groups, child clubs and individuals are contributing to the movement to create "A world fit for children".



For more information, please contact

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