





Tell tale signs

Li'l Indians speak out for a change

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Disclaimer:

The map of India is used for illustrative purposes only and is not to scale.

The children's names and names of states have been changed to protect the identity of the children.

re-Right My Story



Tara was preparing for her civics assignment which she had to present the following morning at school. She was lagging behind per schedule and having to participate and coordinate the Children's Parliament meet that evening added to this delay. Her class had been discussing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and she was given the task of describing Article 2 of the Convention which asserts 'All Rights for All Children... without any discrimination'. She learnt that this right accepted, if not guaranteed, that all children everywhere are entitled to all the rights named in the UN convention on children, no matter where they come from, what religion they practice, the colour of their skin, what their parents do or who they are.

As she was extremely tired, Tara lay on her bed and began a Google search for ideas on what she might present to her class the next morning. She came across hundreds of stories of children from across the world who live in situations that are far from the ideals of this Article, if not from all the Rights enshrined in the Convention itself. She spent hours shocked at the status of her peers across the world, but soon, sleep got the better of her.

In her deep slumber too, Tara's 'Google search' continued. She found herself in a huge library – the kind one would find in a Harry Potter story. Foraging through the reference books of stories from across the world, she found herself researching for her assignment in the fairy tales section of her own little library at home!

Soon she sensed that something was not right. Many of her favourite books were in the wrong place; *Jack and the Beanstalk* was on the bottom shelf, not the top; *Cinderella* was on the left, not the right; and *Hansel and Gretel* was on the floor. On closer inspection, Tara found that all of her fairy tale books had been muddled and messed with. When she opened *The Jungle Book*, to her horror Mowgli was missing from the story! She checked the others, page by page, and the same was true for them too. All the child characters were no longer there!

In her dream, Tara was visited by a huge cast of children from these fairy tales, each and every one of them sad and hurt. They all lined up patiently to tell Tara what was troubling them and, to her surprise, each declared that they wanted their story to be changed because the role that they were playing was not a true characterization of their feelings.

Little Red Riding Hood told Tara how she was scared of the dark woods and the nasty wolf. She didn't like doing the chores for her grandmother because she was afraid of reaching home safely. Mowgli shared how he would have loved having other children to play with whilst he was growing up, and that he found it hard living through such hard times in the jungle. It wasn't as much fun as the book made it sound – living with snakes and tigers around gave him sleepless nights, he confessed to Tara.

Cinderella told Tara how she was exhausted, scrubbing floors and washing dishes; her tiny little hands were full of cracks and sores. Cinderella also mentioned that it hurt her immensely to be excluded and discriminated against. Jack from *Jack and the Beanstalk* then said that he was disgusted with society; how could it allow for his mother to become so poor and do nothing to help her? Selling the cow really was their very last option, but then to be tricked by a conman in the process was surely worthy of a horror story, not a fairy tale!

Character after character shared their story and troubles with Tara, who was still sound asleep and listening to them in her dream. It was when Snow White said that she felt sad because her mother was more interested in looking in the mirror and having long conversations with it, than in playing with her, that Tara realised the importance of this dream. The children in the fairy tales, just like some children in the real world, were not being treated with the dignity they deserved. In fact, Tara knew that in some cases, the real children had even worse roles to play.

When she woke up the next morning, Tara not only knew what she had to say to her class, she had also gained a new understanding and was determined to share this with everyone whom she met. She wasn't too worried that she might get into trouble for speaking-up, rather, she wanted to make sure that all children, fairy tale or real, had loving homes, an education, food and the fun that they deserved.

Tara was now a girl on a mission; a mission to stand up for the rights of all children across the world, whether they lived in a castle, a garbage heap, or even in a land-of-make-believe!

(Original Author Unknown)



Introduction

The story you have just read, is a story I heard as part of the **NINEISMINE** campaign. I'm sure that as part of her research, Tara, would have read some horrible stories about us children in India as well. Often, I hear adults glorify our childhood and claim that they would love to become a child once again. As Tara shared, there are many people who imagine our lives to be like fairy tales. However, sometimes our real life stories are not as dreamlike as they are made out to be; sometimes our stories are outright nightmares.

My story too, and the story of my friends in my neighbourhood, reflect the harsh reality of childhood today. Even though I live just about a kilometre away from India's National Parliament – where all the decisions for millions of Indian children and that of 1.2 billion Indians are made – my life is not made of dreams. As a young girl I have to wash many cars to supplement the family income. I have to do all the household chores while my mother goes out to work. Sometimes, I have to skip my play time to babysit my younger brother. Often I have to miss school to complete my share of work at home. Toilets, too, are an issue since I have to cross two large chaotic roads to visit communal toilets that are not always safe, clean, well-lit, or for that matter even open.

I recently heard a frightening account of one of my friends who was picked up from her bed one night by a total stranger. I know of others who are forced into child labour and some who have





even been married-off as children. If children like us, who live so close to our Parliament, go through such horrible times, then what about the majority of Indians that live in villages; in remote areas and other difficult situations in our country? I live in fear in my own motherland, as I witness and hear accounts of the brutality to which many of my young peers are subjected.

But, as part of the **NINEISMINE** campaign, I have learnt to use my story to claim my own rights. And I don't have to stop there. I can use that same story to speak for the rights of all the 400 million children of India, if not the 2 billion global 'kidizens' of the world. I truly believe that my story is a 'tell-tale' of the harsh realities of so many of my peers.

This collection of stories is a result of a process that the **NINEISMINE** campaign conducted with us children as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Process, in the lead up to India's review of Human Rights to be held in Geneva in May 2017. The UPR Process is led by the United Nations' Human Rights Commission (Geneva) and it attempts to keep governments across the world accountable to each other regarding protecting, promoting and guaranteeing the promises enshrined in the Human Rights Declaration and subsequent agreements.

There were consultations held across India, in every single state and union territory of our nation. Children were invited to write their stories and those of their peers as accounts of their reality. Children do not often have access to statistics and research papers or even library books. But what we do have is our own stories, our own experiences, our dreams, and our aspirations.

We therefore use the power of our own stories as we begin a new conversation about a new India and a new world. This new India of our dreams, we have captured as recommendations to our Government and to our world. We hope that the world will henceforth recognise us as equal,

active and fully-included citizens of today, and thus, productive and involved citizens of tomorrow. We realise that it is necessary for us to speak-up now to secure our future and that of our peers. In doing so, we hope to set the right standards for the billions of children who will succeed us.

TELL TALE SIGNS is a compilation of 35 such stories that had emerged from 35 different states and union territories of our nation. These stories are of 'Li'l Indians who speak out for a change' – who speak out rather than adhere to the norm that 'children should be seen and not heard' and who believe that the voices of children do matter. They claim their space in the India of today and the World of today as global citizens, even as they use their aspirations and recommendations as a platform to seek a new world, to seek a new India for their generation and for those to come.

Our Indian Government's Ministry of Women and Child Development has admitted that 40% of Indian children (200 million of us) live in vulnerable situations that deprive us of realising our potential. If India really needs to become EK BHARAT, SHRESHT BHARAT (One India, Supreme India) then India cannot forget our voices, the voices of India's least in the spirit of Gandhi's Antyodaya – a development that begins with care for the last.

I wish to extend my gratitude to UNICEF for giving us this opportunity to express our stories and voices for a change. May our stories be 'for every child'. I wish to thank **NINEISMINE** for modelling children's genuine participation and creating yet another child-friendly platform, through story-telling, for our voices to influence policies and to affect change. This is another step towards making this a unique campaign, one that is genuinely 'of, for and by the children'. I finally wish to thank PRATYeK that has the ideal that 'every child (speaks) for every right... for everyone', in a world where every right is respected and every dream is fulfilled. Your tireless efforts have not gone unnoticed.

We hope that these stories prompt and introduce you to the realities of us children across India, even as they disturb you enough into working ... with us... for a change!

manisha

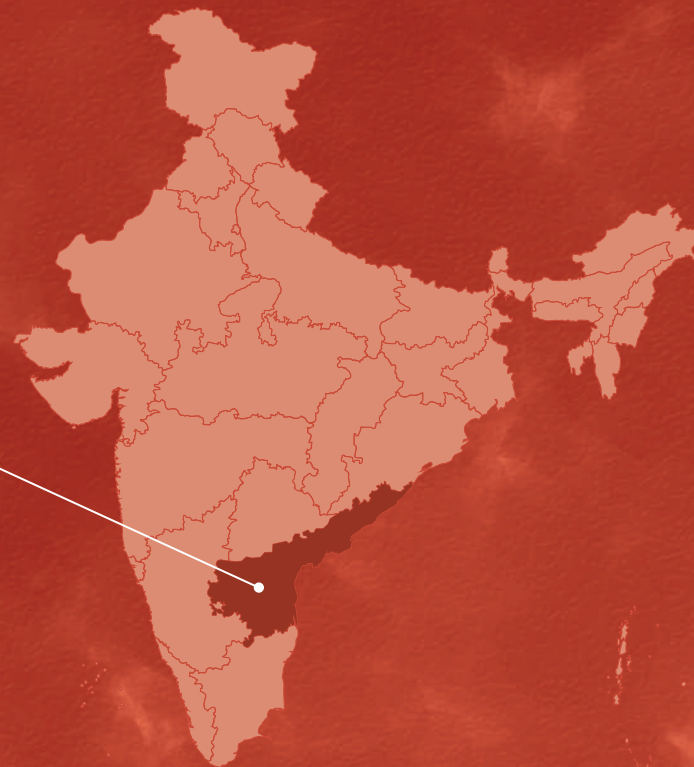
Sincerely,

Manisha

Age 14

NINEISMINE

A Child's Tale of Neglect from Andhra Pradesh



My name is Lalita. I am 17 years old. My parents were always very nice to me and my sisters, but troubles began in my family when my father died suddenly. We struggled to get food and other basic necessities. Soon my mother became very sick and I had to stop my education. She then decided to get my sister married. My sister was in a sorry plight. After she twice gave birth to daughters, her husband left her. His family also started troubling her, so she shifted back to our house. We do not have any brothers and there are only women our house. We do not have jobs. It is very difficult to look after my sister and her children. We cannot afford to send them to school. We do not even own a house and now we are facing a lot of problems.



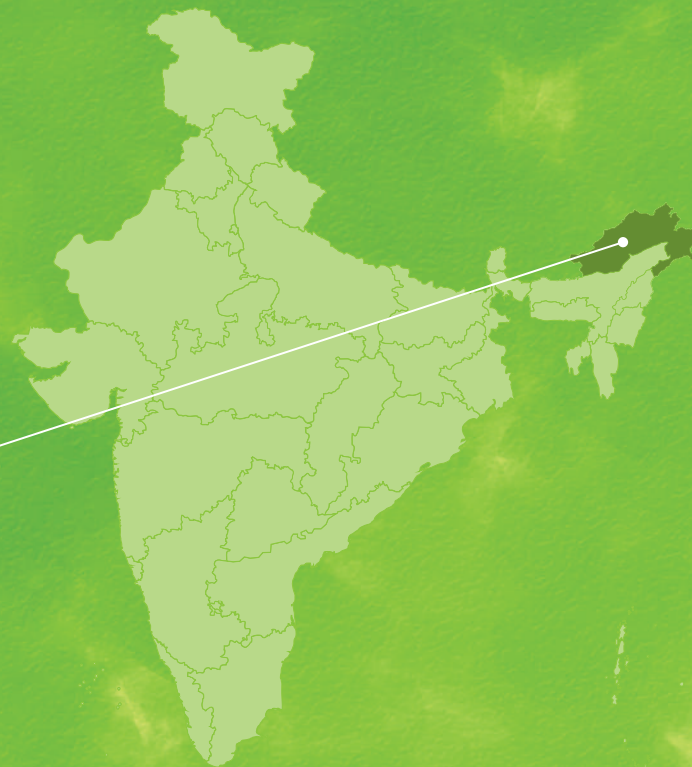
Recommendation

That the Government of India:

- Increases taxes on the rich to ensure quality services to the poor



A Child's Tale of Slavery from Arunachal Pradesh



I once knew a boy named Rohit who had migrated from Bangladesh along with his family and settled in Malipuri, Assam. They were so poor that the entire family worked as rag-pickers. Although Rohit wished to go to school, his family could not afford to send him. So, every day, when other children went to school, Rohit went to the dump yard and scavenged for recyclable material, in order to help earn a living for his family.

Even though this story is of a singly boy, there are still millions of such children in our country who are deprived of their rights.



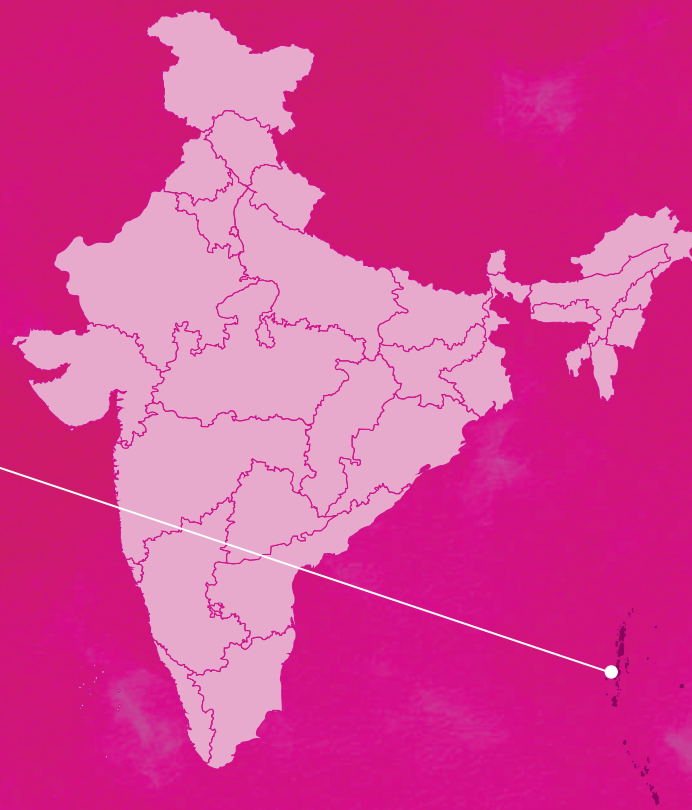
Recommendation

That the Government of India:

- Guarantees parents' Right to Work with decent and just wages and with proper written contracts.
- Ensures a complete ban on child labour that deprives any citizen below the age of 18 years, his or her Right to Develop and Right to a Childhood.
- Extends the MNREGA scheme to ensure work throughout the entire year and across the country.



A Child's Tale of Ragging from Andaman Islands



My name is Maria. I am a 17-year-old from Port Blair and I go to college in Mumbai. Due to my dark complexion, I was bullied by a group of boys and girls at college. They called me names like 'Kali', 'Blacko', etc. I tried all sorts of cosmetics that promised to make my complexion fairer, but they were of no use. Due to the endless teasing, I left this college and moved to another one, but I found that the same thing happened to me there as well. I cannot bear the taunts and humiliation about my complexion and so have tried harming myself on a few occasions, just to deal with the pain.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

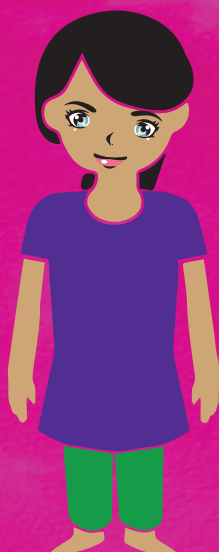
- Includes lessons on gender sensitivity into every year of schooling.



A Child's Tale of Trafficking from Assam



Payal is a young girl from Assam. In order to earn some money for shelter, Payal's family sold her to an Arunachali man as a labourer. Within 3 days of being sold, she ran away from the man's house and went to the police. Payal was then handed over to the Childline of Itanagar, where her family was called, and she was questioned by the police and Childline staff. Her family refused to take her back as they did not have enough money for her shelter. Payal was then put into a shelter home for children.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Strictly prohibits child labour, and should give compensation to children for the betterment of their education and livelihood.
- Mandates that all police stations be made child-friendly.



A Child's Tale of Basic Needs from Bihar



This story is about Raj who goes to school in Patna, Bihar. He lives in a small house with his parents. His father is alcoholic and spends all the household money on his drinks. Raj's parents are unable to look after him or to maintain their house. The house does not even have electricity and, as a result, he is unable to study properly. The future of this young boy is jeopardised because of the problems he faces in his home.

What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Increases budgetary allocation (GDP, public spending) on Education (6%), Health (5%) and Children (10%).
- Introduces Child-Budgets in all ministries related to children.





A Child's Tale of Abuse from Chhattisgarh



There was once a rich man who lived near my house. He adopted an orphan and, initially, treated the orphaned boy very well. But after a few months he made this boy do all the work and beat him if he did not. The young boy bore the abuse because he was too scared to speak up. One day the man sold the boy to a person who forced him to become a beggar.

What children recommend...

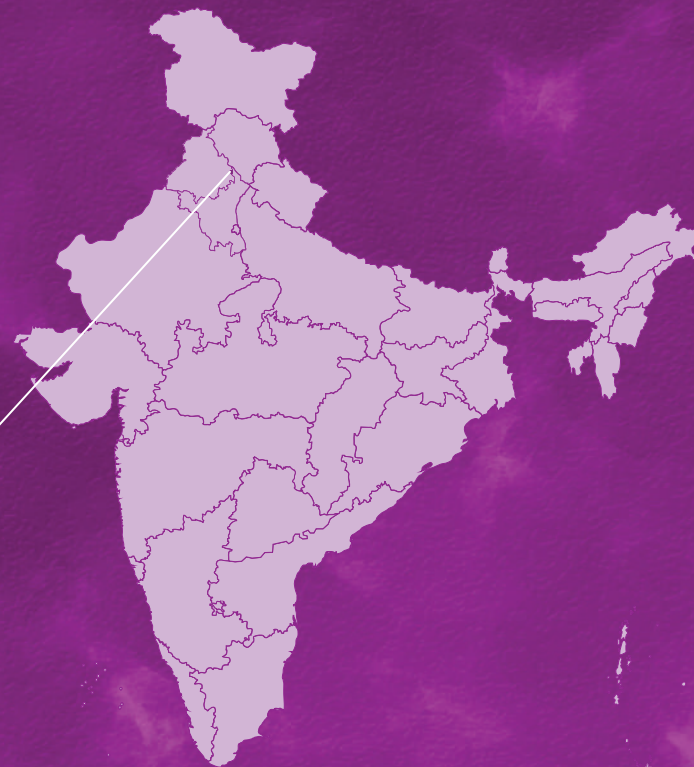
That the Government of India:

- Ensures that before a child from an orphanage is adopted, the family who is adopting the child should be thoroughly checked.





A Child's Tale of Addiction from Chandigarh



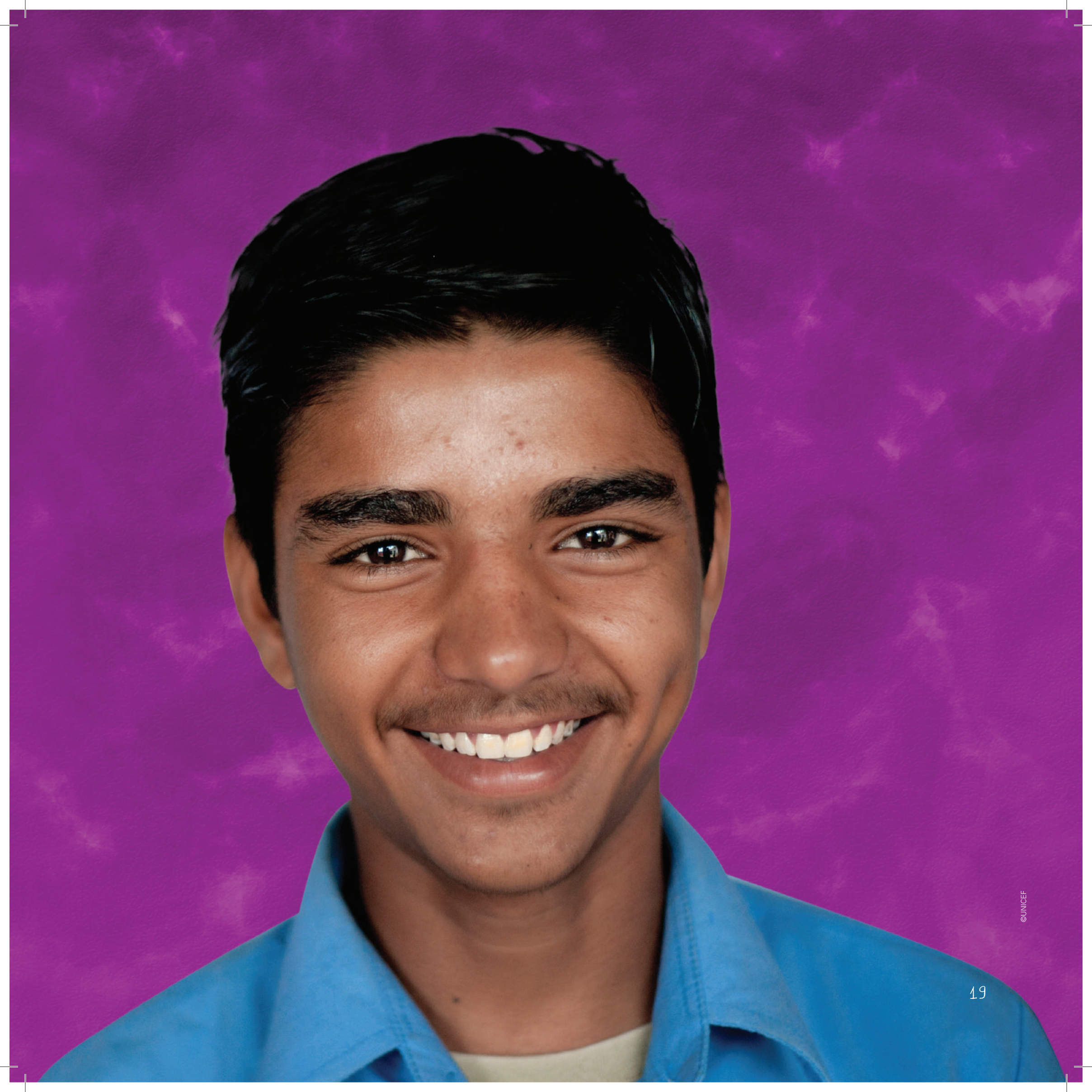
One day, as I was standing at the bus stop to go to college, I saw a young boy standing nearby. He was a teenager – perhaps 14 or 15 years old. A man was standing next to this boy and smoking. I could see that the boy was looking at this man very intently. After smoking, the man threw his cigarette stub onto the road and walked away. The boy picked up the cigarette stub and took a puff. As soon as he inhaled the smoke, he made a face and threw the cigarette away. The next day, however, I reached the bus stop at the same time and saw the boy go to the shop to buy a cigarette. The day after that, the shops were closed and the boy could not buy a cigarette. This upset him hugely. He was so frustrated that he picked up a stone and threw it at the shop window, shattering the glass in his desire for a cigarette. I have seen many such incidents in my state.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Takes measures to ensure that adults cannot expose children to harmful habits.
- Defines the age of a child as 18 for all matters related to children including criminality, labour and the right to education.



A Child's Tale of Child Marriage from Daman and Diu



Aditi, is a bright 16-year-old from Daman and Diu. An excellent student who was in Grade 10, and always came first in the class, she was horrified when one day her parents arranged her marriage without her knowledge or desire to wed.



Aditi had always dreamed of becoming a teacher but instead she had to drop out of school. Her dreams were shattered by her parent's decisions that affected her entire future.

Like Aditi, there are many girls and boys in our country who face similar problems. Although we think child marriage has been abolished, the practice persists till date.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Sets-up a students' committee in every school which is representative of the socio-economic and religious diversity and also of disability. Its views and suggestions must be taken seriously.
- Ensures that no girl or boy is allowed to get married before the age of 18 and 21, respectively.
- Considers all child marriages as null and void and re-conducts such marriages when the girl is 18 or more, but only if both individuals concerned approve of the same.



A Child's Tale of Basic Needs from Dadra and Nagar Haveli



I am Sumit from Dadra and Nagar Haveli. During the monsoons we have ample water. However, during the summer the rivers dry up. Sometimes our cattle does not have any water to drink, leading to the death of many animals. Moreover, there isn't enough water for us to drink or use in our houses. The PWD sends government tankers, but the water is only provided at the recommendation of the head of the village.



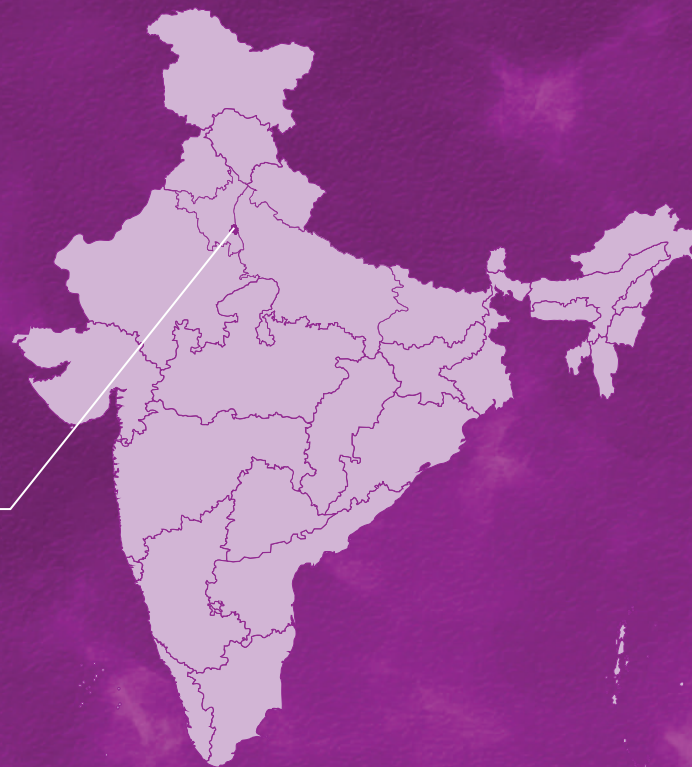
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Encourages rain water harvesting and the sustainable use of other resources while discouraging mega-projects that destroy the earth and displace people.



A Child's Tale of Marginalisation from Delhi



There was once a child who was born as a trans-gender in a respected family. The child was not accepted by the parents or any other family members. S/he was not allowed to play with his friends or go out of his house. His/her rights were exploited as s/he was not able to express himself. His/her brothers and sisters teased him/her and they all attended school except him/her; s/he was deprived of the opportunities and freedoms available to other children.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Ensures that people are made aware of trans-genders, rights and prevents discrimination against them. Measures should be taken to ensure that they are treated as part of the society.



A Child's Tale of Apathy from Goa



Mira was a 16-year-old girl who studied in a girl's hostel. One day a rich, selfish, politician came to visit the hostel. He instantly took a liking to Mira and wanted to get married to her. Although Mira resisted, she was finally forced to get married. Her husband promised she would be allowed to continue her studies even after marriage. However, after marriage, she was sexually abused by the man and once he was fed up of her, he filed for divorce. The young girl still wanted to continue her education, but was denied admission by the school administration as she was a married woman.



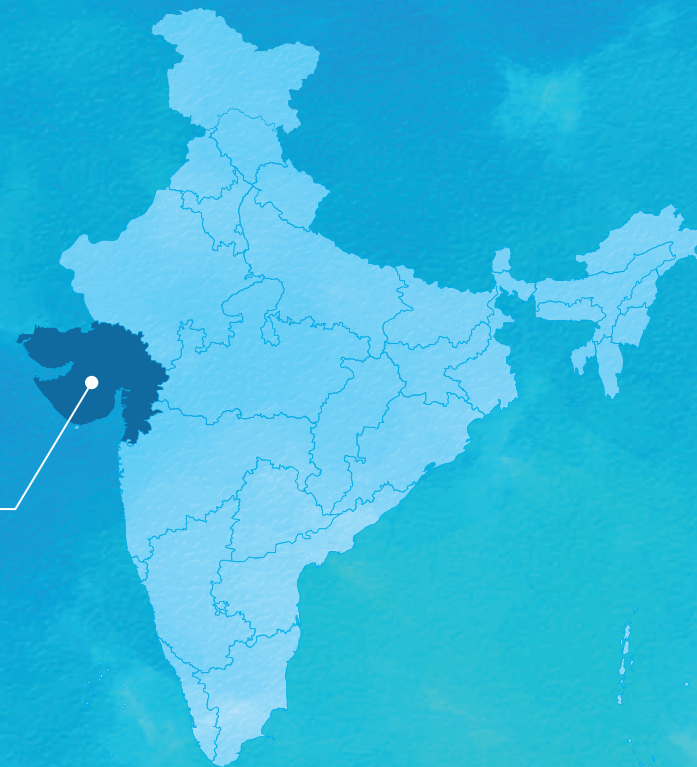
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Ensures that no girl or boy should be allowed to get married before the age of 18 and 21 respectively.



A Child's Tale of Natural Disasters from Gujarat



Sanjana is a poor girl from Manipur who is a victim of nature's calamities. Recently, an earthquake destroyed her house. This misfortune was followed by heavy rainfall that worsened the situation. Because of this, her family faced a food crisis, and the lack of adequate health facilities added to their woes. The government, too, did not respond to this disaster. The loss of property, poor health conditions as well as diminishing hope, made her access to education impossible.



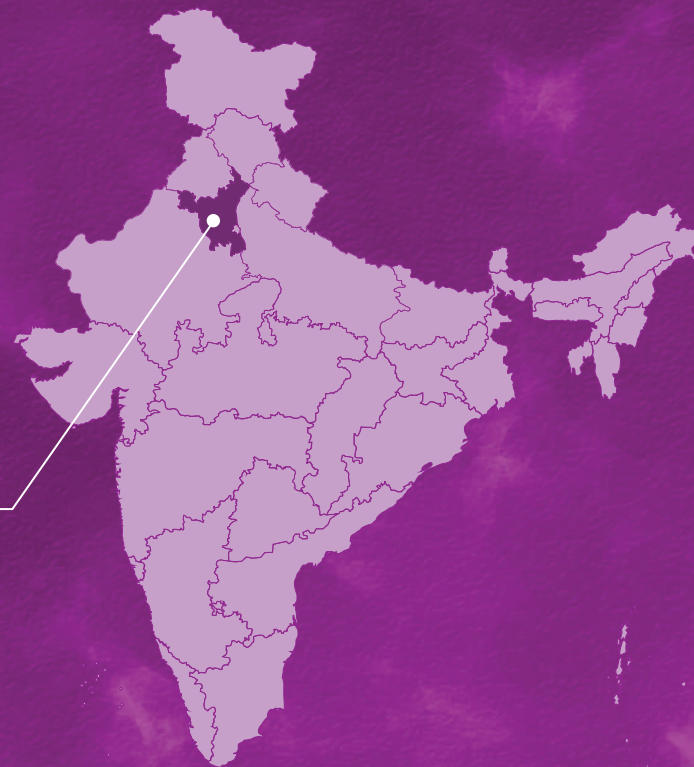
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Makes regular disaster safety drills and awareness raising mandatory in all schools, offices and housing societies.
- Provides relief to the victims of natural calamities and creates better living conditions for the poor.



A Child's Tale of Wastage from Haryana



In my village there is a lot of wastage of natural resources. One day, as I was taking a walk in the park, I saw a child cutting a tree for firewood. I told the child to stop cutting the tree and tried to explain to him that the tree provides us with oxygen to live. I have also seen people leave the tap running after drinking water from a public tap. One day, when I saw a man do this, I told him that he should not waste water, because if there is no water then there will not be any crops, and if there are no crops then we will all die of hunger. People are not aware of the importance of saving our natural resources.



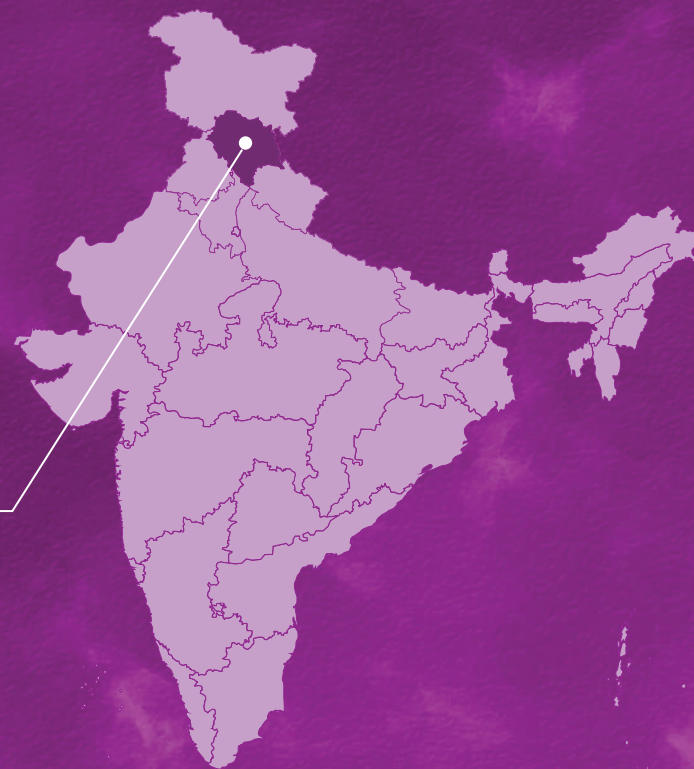
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- ▶ Bans the deforestation of present forests completely while planting only native species of trees and plants.
- ▶ Promotes the use and production of renewable energy.
- ▶ Empowers the independent Green Commissions and Tribunals.



A Child's Tale of Labour from Himachal Pradesh



In Sirsaur district of Himachal Pradesh, there is a young 14 year old boy who is a dishwasher in a village dhaba. Before taking-up this job, he worked on someone else's land as a labourer. His parents are very poor and cannot afford to send him to school. This young boy is responsible for his entire family. He is the one who supports them all at this tender age of 14. But he has no choice: If he goes to school, who will look after his family?

What children recommend...

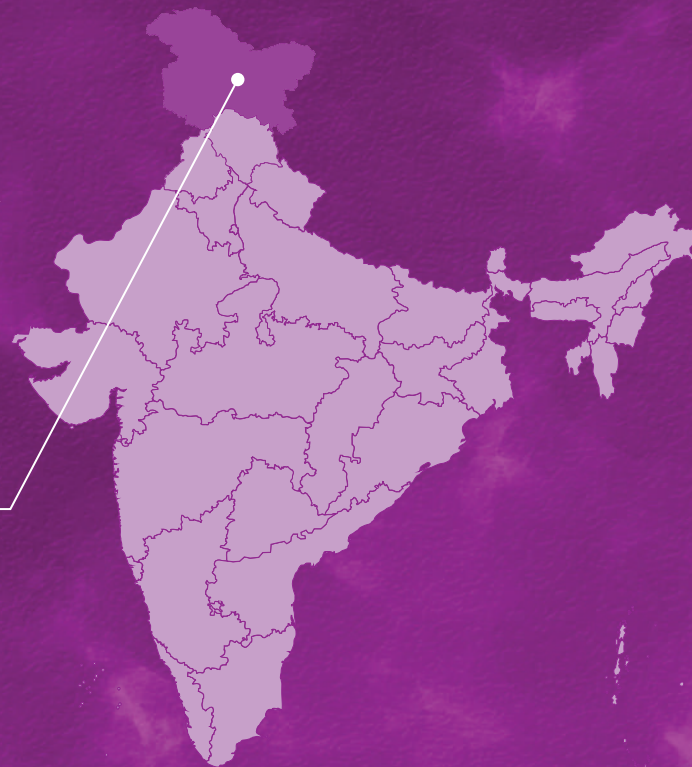
That the Government of India:

- ▶ Ensures a complete ban on child labour that deprives any citizen below the age of 18, his or her Right to Develop and the Right to a Childhood.
- ▶ Ensures that every elected representative (including CMs, MPs and MLAs) and government officials, knows about these SDGs, and their targets and indicators.
- ▶ Encourages the formation of genuine neighbourhood Children's Parliaments that are federated with the district, state, national and international levels.
- ▶ Ensures that the SDGs, Human Rights and Child Rights awareness classes and workshops are held in all educational and professional institutions and with government officials.





A Child's Tale of Education from Jammu & Kashmir



The biggest problem in our school in Jammu is that we are not taught properly. For instance, the teachers in our school spend more time on their phones (looking at Facebook or WhatsApp) rather than teaching us. Some of the teachers have themselves only studied till grade 12, and are not good at teaching. Most of the time, our syllabus is left incomplete, which leads to many children failing. This endangers our future, as well as the future of our whole country.

What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Provides qualified teachers and quality education.
- Provides an education that is free, compulsory, inclusive and complete. The standard in all schools must be at least that of the Kendriya Vidyalayas.

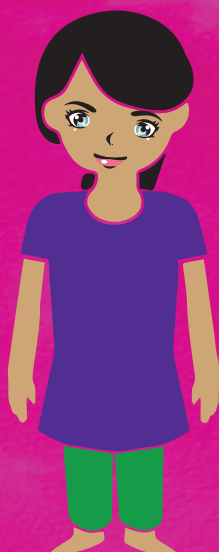




A Child's Tale of Slavery from Jharkhand



Aarti was merely 10 years old when her parents sold her to an old man for Rs. 2,000, the price of a cow. The man did not take much care of Aarti because, according to him, he had bought the child and therefore had the freedom to do anything to her. He started abusing her. Although her family knew about this, they did not take any action. The villagers and the head of the village also knew of the situation, yet everyone turned a blind eye to Aarti's plight. Aarti is now living a miserable life without any freedom or the rights she deserves.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- ▶ Takes measures to protect the girl child and provides them with the basic necessities and opportunities.
- ▶ Makes all information and data about the SDGs and child-related schemes accessible, particularly to children themselves.



A Child's Tale of Frustration from Karnataka



My name is Maya and although you may think I have an easy time compared to other children, I am really frustrated with my life. My parents force me to do things I do not want to do. I have my own dreams, but they do not let me pursue them. They constantly belittle me in front of my siblings, and say that I am not good enough. They say I am not fit for anything. I want to have the right to choose my own career. I think every girl child should have such a right. Am I really not fit to do what I want to do? Don't I have the right to be what I dream of being?



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Ensures all citizens have the right to choose their own careers, despite their gender.



A Child's Tale of Irresponsible Consumption from Kerala



Shankar and his family lived in a beautiful place called Matthul in Kerala. He was a fisherman, and had two sons – Mohan and Raghav. Their house was near the seashore in Matthul, and there was no barrier between the sea and the land. One holiday, while Mohan was visiting his relatives' home during the school break, tragedy struck in the form of a deadly sea wave that took the lives of Mohan's parents and brother.

This terrible tragedy happened because big companies mined sand at the sea shore near their house. This led to the seashore becoming weak and to Mohan losing his family.



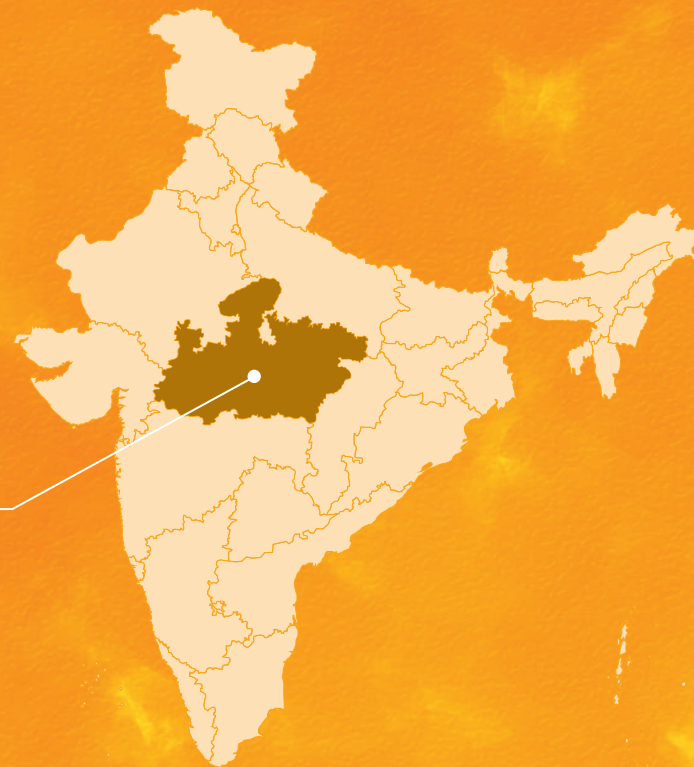
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- ❖ Bans all destructive mining completely. All mining companies should have a mandatory reforestation and restoration plan of the mined area.
- ❖ Increases budgets of the environment ministries.



A Child's Tale of Struggle from Madhya Pradesh



Manoj is a little boy who lives on Kolar Road, Bhopal. He is 9 years old, and works as a rag picker. His day starts early in the morning and he works till late evening to gather valuable things that have been thrown into the garbage by well-off people. He collects these items and sells them to earn his living. For him, it is very hard to travel in the bus as he does not have enough money to pay the fare. Even government buses do not allow him to travel. What can our government do for him?

What children recommend...

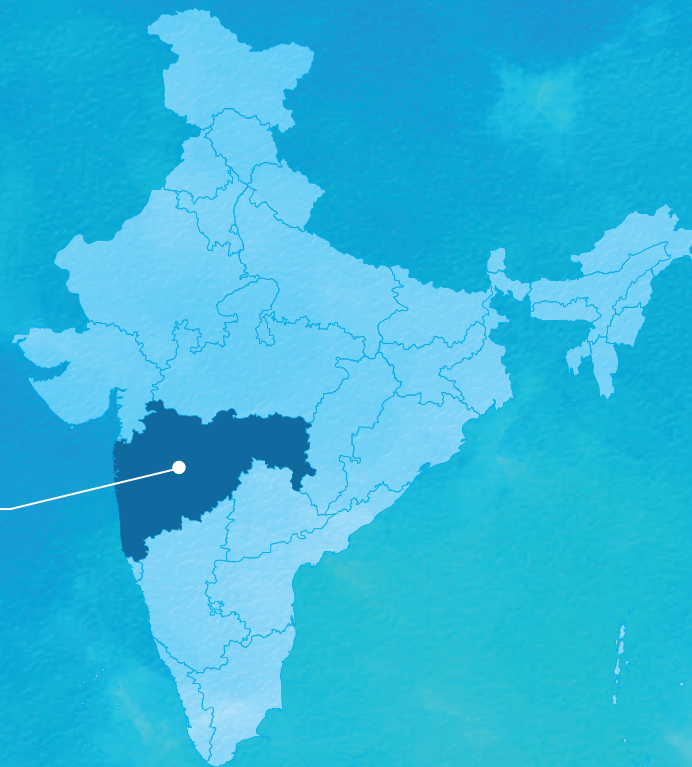
That the Government of India:

- Introduces a complete point-to-point segregation of waste programme while ensuring that the rag-pickers are recognised as workers with rights and dignity.
- Provides proper transport facilities and better living conditions for children.
- Ensures a complete ban on child labour that deprives any citizen below the age of 18 years of his or her Right to Develop and the Right to a Childhood.





A Child's Tale of Habitat Destruction from Maharashtra



Deforestation is one of the major issues in our Adivasiwadis in Maharashtra. Our forests are being destroyed by deforestation as well as forest fires. Because of this deforestation, our people have lost their livelihood; we are not able to get any firewood or collect products to sell. There is now water scarcity in our area and the increase in heat is leading to a subsequent change in temperature. All this has also affected the number of wild animals in our forest.

What children recommend...

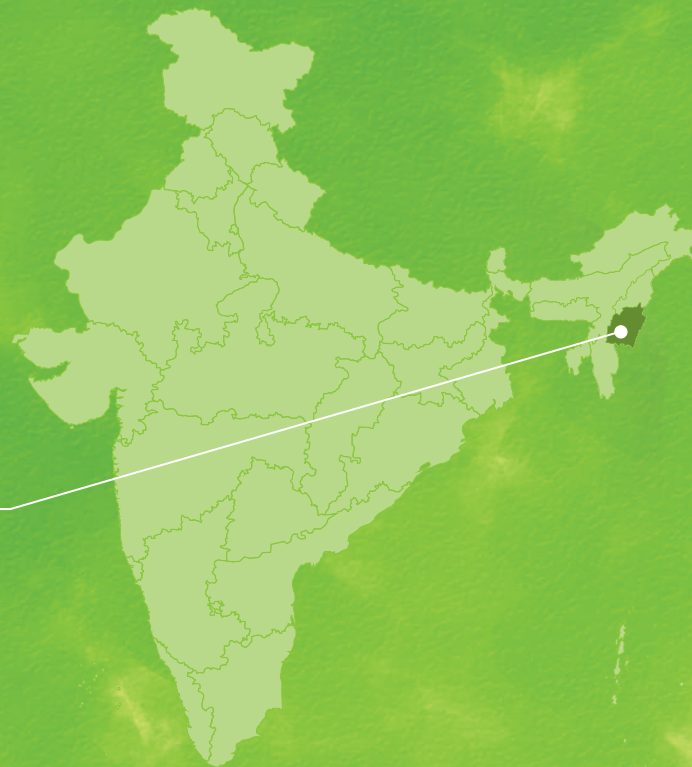
That the Government of India:

- Provides only organic fertilizers and natural inputs to all farmers, especially women, Dalits, and Adivasis.
- Increases budgets of the Environment ministries.
- Empowers the Independent Green Commissions and Tribunals.
- Bans the deforestation of present forests completely and plants only native species of trees and plants.





A Child's Tale of Loss from Manipur



Gopal was from a middle class Manipuri family. He lived with, and looked after, his blind wife and their children. One night, when Gopal went out to get a van, the army saw him and killed him on the mere suspicion that he was an insurgent. His young son, Arnav, was left alone to look after his blind mother and little siblings. Till now justice has not been delivered to Gopal and his family. In fact, a few years later, Arnav himself lost his life to Armed Forces (Special Power) Act. (AFSPA)

What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Prohibits the occupation of any school by the army or police even during conflict.
- Passes strict anti-corruption laws immediately.
- Signs all international conventions and optional protocols that relate to children.
- Provides every child with birth registration, which should be done within 21 days of birth, at all local health care centres.
- Withdraws AFSPA from all applicable states, immediately.





A Child's Tale of Emotional Torment from Meghalaya



Megha, a young teenager from Meghalaya, shifted to Delhi to study in a college. Due to her North-Eastern looks, she was often teased by fellow students who called her names like 'Japanese', 'Chinese', 'Momo', etc. This constant taunting by her peers made Megha miserable and depressed. She complained to the Principal of the college. Although the Principal warned the students not to tease her, they paid no attention and continued to rag and physically abuse her. One day, when Megha could not bear it any longer, she committed suicide.



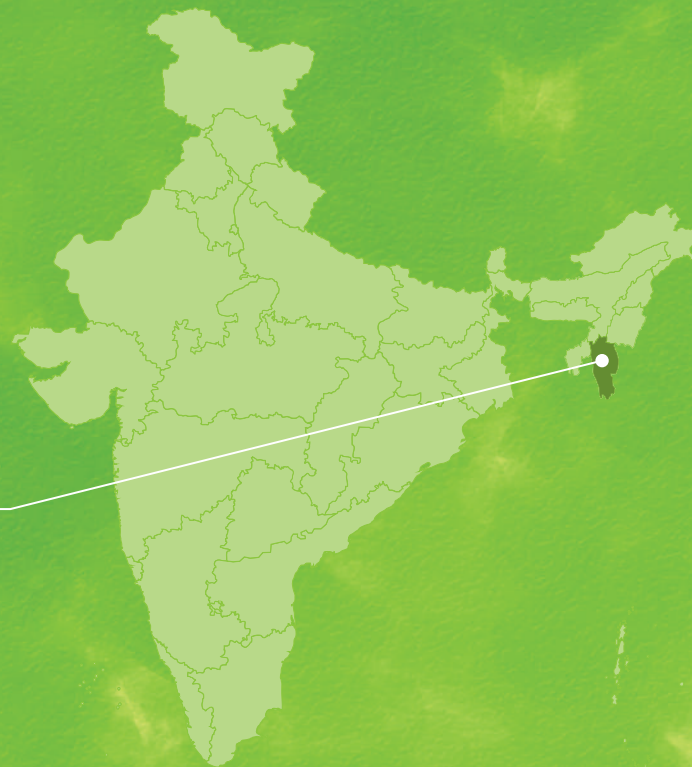
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Ensures that every child is treated equally.



A Child's Tale of Poverty from Mizoram



My name is Kamla. We shifted from our village to along with my family because my parents hoped to find work here. However, since we do not have enough money for a proper house, we have been facing a lot of difficulties. Water leaks into our house every time it rains, and since we do not have any electricity, my cousins and I are forced to study under a street light every day after school. We find that people in our neighbourhood dump their garbage near our house. This is a great threat to our health, but if any of us falls ill because of this, we will not have the money to go to a hospital. Only those people who have money can afford to go to the hospital, the others, like us, lose our lives.



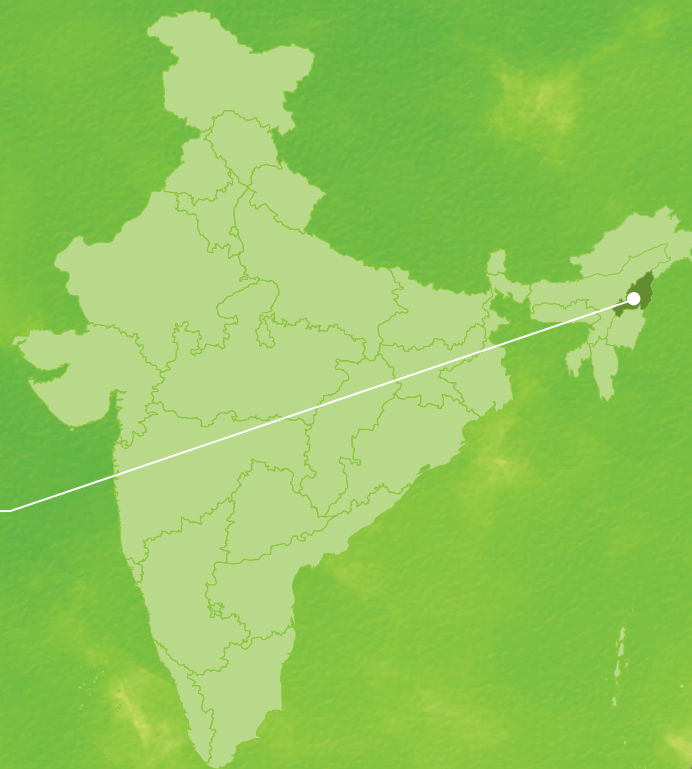
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Provides sufficient and regular electricity to every house across India by 2020.
- Ensures that facilities, medical care and medicines available at government hospitals are of the same quality as at the leading private hospitals in India.



A Child's Tale of Rape and Corruption from Nagaland



A six-year-old girl named Ruhi lived in a small village in Nagaland. She was sexually abused by an elderly man. She was then hospitalized and her family filed a case against the man. He was arrested, but no action was taken against him even after a week. The little girl soon died but the man was freed because he was friends with the police constable. The victim's family was not given their rights, and the culprit was set free.

What children recommend...

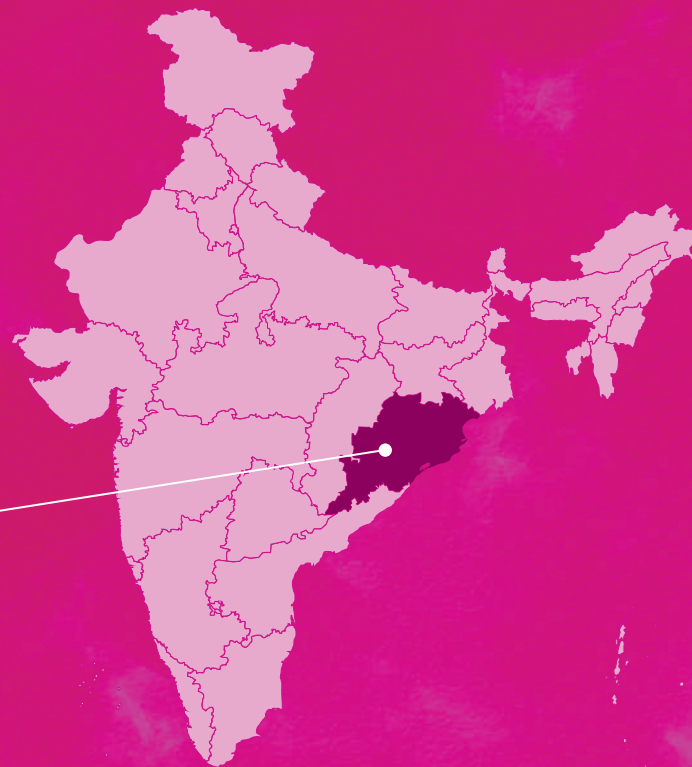
That the Government of India:

- Passes strict anti-corruption laws immediately.
- Signs all international conventions and optional protocols that relate to children.

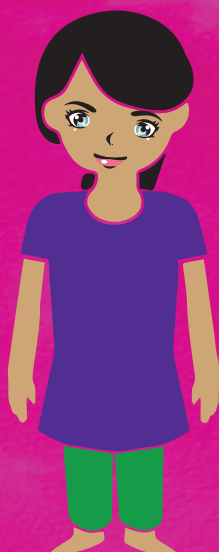




A Child's Tale of Limitations from Odisha



Since my parents are uneducated, they think it is fine if I, too, am not educated. They do not want to send me or my siblings to school. Instead, they want us to work and earn money. Most parents have faith that the government will provide education to their children, but they are unaware of the government's schemes for free education. Parents need to be educated and made aware of such government initiatives. It is lack of awareness and information that prevents parents from sending their children to school. If you ever see a child labourer, catch him or her and send the child to school.



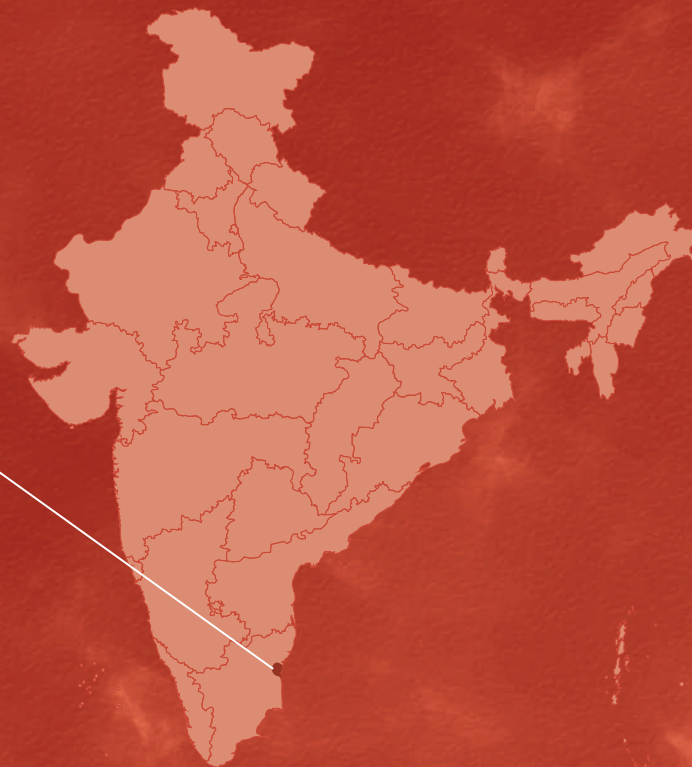
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Punishes parents if they send their children to work instead of school.
- Creates opportunities for the meaningful and widespread gathering of children's opinions on all matters concerning children.



A Child's Tale of Struggle from Puducherry



My name is Anjana. I suppose you can say that I live with my mother and step-father. The truth is that they have sent me to a hostel. All this happened because my real father drank very heavily and this caused many problems in our home. Then, one day, my mother left my father and shifted to Puducherry with another man. However, my mother's new husband had a child of his own, because of which my mother and step-father admitted me into a hostel. The neglect of my parents and their carelessness towards my welfare caused many upheavals in my life and I even had to repeat Grade 5 twice in school.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Ensures that children get proper care.
- Emphasizes child education, especially for children from rural backgrounds.



A Child's Tale of Ill-Health from Punjab



Kishore is a 12-year-old boy who works at a tea stall in my neighbourhood. His life revolves around selling tea, helping his uncle, and trying his best to make ends meet. He spends the entire day in an un-hygienic slum, and does not have any proper food. He is always under the hot sun, next to the hot stove, and on the roadside where hundreds of vehicles and pedestrians pass by him. The pollution he faces everyday has affected his health, resulting in an acute lung disease.

What children recommend...

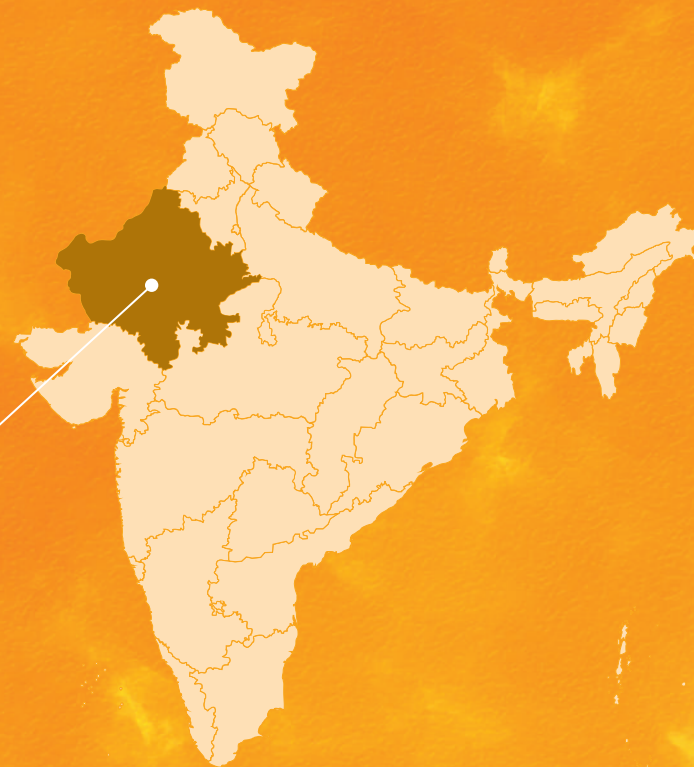
That the Government of India:

- ◆ Makes every Public Health Centre (PHC) and government hospital child friendly and accessible to all particularly the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities.
- ◆ Provides incentives to poor and un-educated children. They should be provided with proper nutrition, healthcare facilities and education.





A Child's Tale of Indignity from Rajasthan



Mona, A teenager, did not have the facility of proper sanitation in her village. She was forced to defecate out in the open, and because of this, she was abused by some boys in the village. Mona, therefore, had to go through a traumatic experience in addition to the unavailability of proper washrooms. On her behalf, we plead to the government to take steps to ensure proper sanitation so that every child feels safe and secure.

What children recommend...

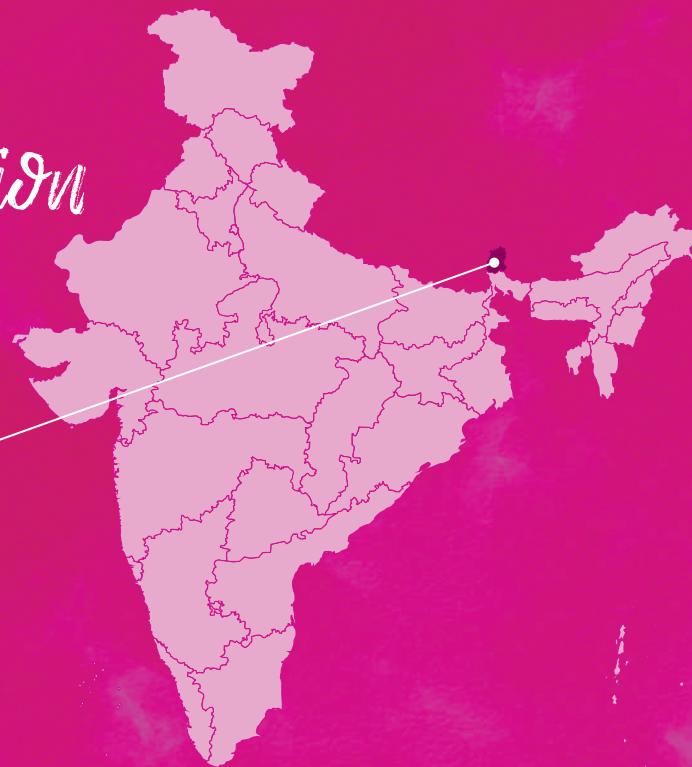
That the Government of India:

- Provides every house with a toilet, with proper drainage systems and with sufficient light and water.
- Provides sufficient and child-friendly public toilets at common places which are maintained regularly.
- Provides every house with a toilet, proper drainage systems and with sufficient light and water.
- Ensures that all new toilets should be green toilets that use biotechnology and less water.
- Provides sufficient and child-friendly public toilets at common places, which are then maintained regularly.
- Ensures that all schools, offices and public places are provided with toilets for girls and people with disabilities.

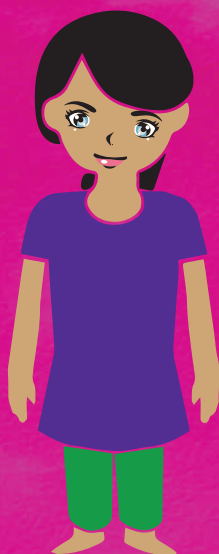




A Child's Tale of ostracization from Sikkim



There was a poor family in our village in Sikkim. The mother was sick and the father was unemployed. He was an alcoholic and would beat his wife and torture his son whenever he got drunk. Their monthly family income was around Rs. 2000. One day, the father sold the house and went to Qatar. After this, his wife had an affair with someone and the community soon came to know about this. They insulted her and no one helped the family. The landlord asked them to leave their home and the mother and son were forced to sleep on the road, on a sack. The son could not continue his education and now we will have to help him get back to a normal life.



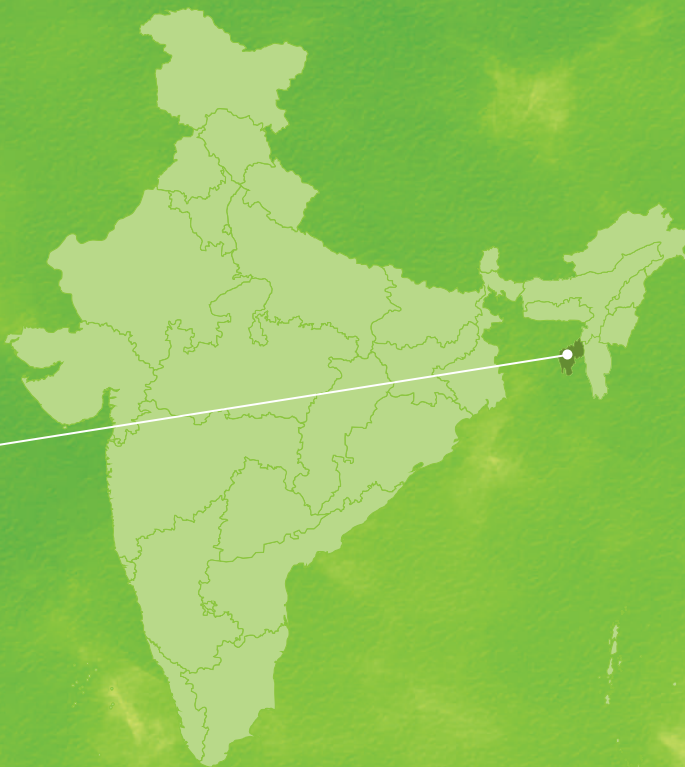
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- ❖ Extends the MNREGA scheme to ensure work throughout the entire year and across the country.
- ❖ Ensures that all women are given equal decision making powers. They should have at least 33% representation in all elected bodies from the village council up to the National Parliament.



A Child's Tale of Water Pollution Water from Tripura



Udaipur in Tripura is also known as Lake City. The lake named Amar Sagar is situated in the heart of the city. Its water is getting polluted day-by-day because residents of its surrounding areas are regularly dumping plastic bags and domestic waste directly into the lake. Even the sewage outlets are directed straight into the lake. The people who use this water are becoming prey to many water-borne diseases.

What children recommend...

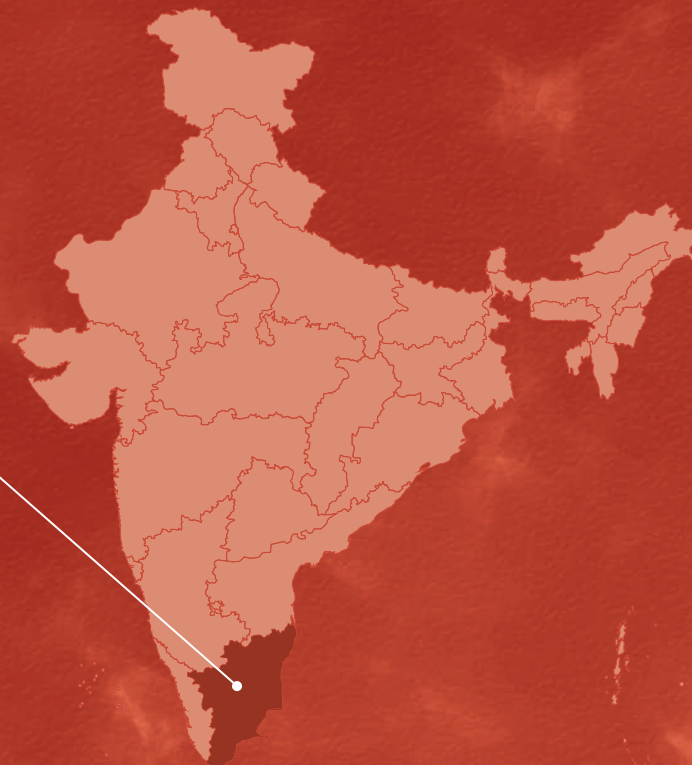
That the Government of India:

- Bans the dumping of untreated human and industrial wastes into rivers and oceans.
- Ends overfishing and illegal fishing, while protecting smaller fishing communities.
- Ensures a complete ban on non-recyclable, non-reusable plastic bags.





A Child's Tale of Support from Tamil Nadu



Ranjay, from Tamil Nadu, enrolled in our school to study in Grade 6. He has a physical disability and cannot eat, walk, stand or move by himself. His peers and friends used to support him and help him walk, play, eat, etc. We spent time with him, and therefore, over time, his self-confidence increased and he started interacting with us like a member of our peer group. The fact that we treated him equally and were inclusive made him very happy and hopeful.

What children recommend...

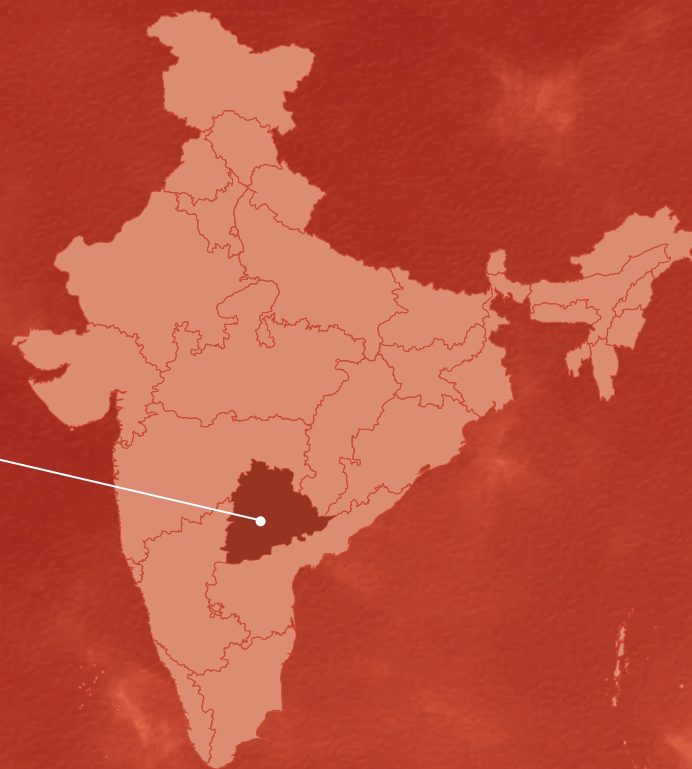
That the Government of India:

- ▶ Ensures quality medical treatment and inclusive education for all disabled children.
- ▶ Provides the best specialised care to all children with disabilities and other vulnerabilities within an inclusive environment and in the same neighbourhood school where their siblings and friends study.
- ▶ Makes technology usable, affordable and relevant to improving the lives of persons with disabilities.





A Child's Tale of Rescue from Telangana



Rani lives in a village in Telangana along with her younger sister. The girls were orphaned at a young age and did not have any family to support them. Seeing their bleak situation, the neighbours in the village took them both to an NGO. Once at the NGO, both the girls got a good education, protection and were happy.



What children recommend...

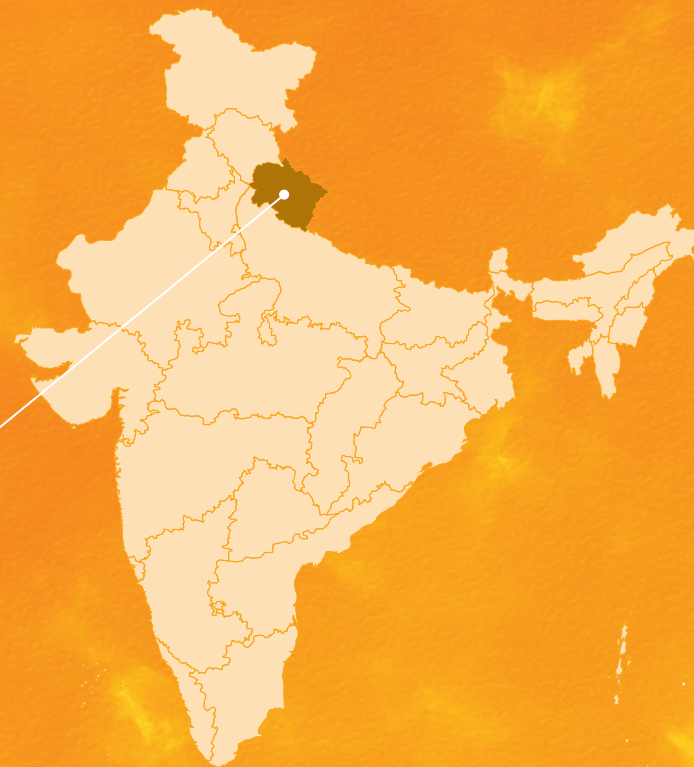
That the Government of India:

- Extends the RTE from early preschool years to all children up to class 12 or age 18.





A Child's Tale of Poverty from Uttarakhand



I am Raj, a resident of Podi district in Uttarakhand. My school is very far from my house, and therefore, I have to travel a lot. It is especially difficult to travel when it rains, as the roads have potholes and there is a constant fear of being attacked by animals. There is no bus service provided for our travel.

What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Builds proper transport infrastructure with reliable, frequent, affordable and disabled-friendly public buses and transport systems.
- Installs fully functioning lights along all streets and roads and in all public places.
- Builds cycle tracks and barrier-free footpaths in all cities and villages.





A Child's Tale of Cyber Crime from Uttar Pradesh



My name is Meera. I live in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh and am the only daughter of my parents. When I passed class 12, my parents were very happy, and as a gift, they gave me a smart phone. However, soon after my graduation I started facing problems because of this phone. I had created a Facebook account for myself, through which, some months ago, I got in touch with a boy. He soon asked for my photographs, which I gave him. At that moment I did not understand his intentions. After a few months, however, he started threatening me with the same photographs, saying that he would show them to others. I am worried and have now filed a police complaint against him.



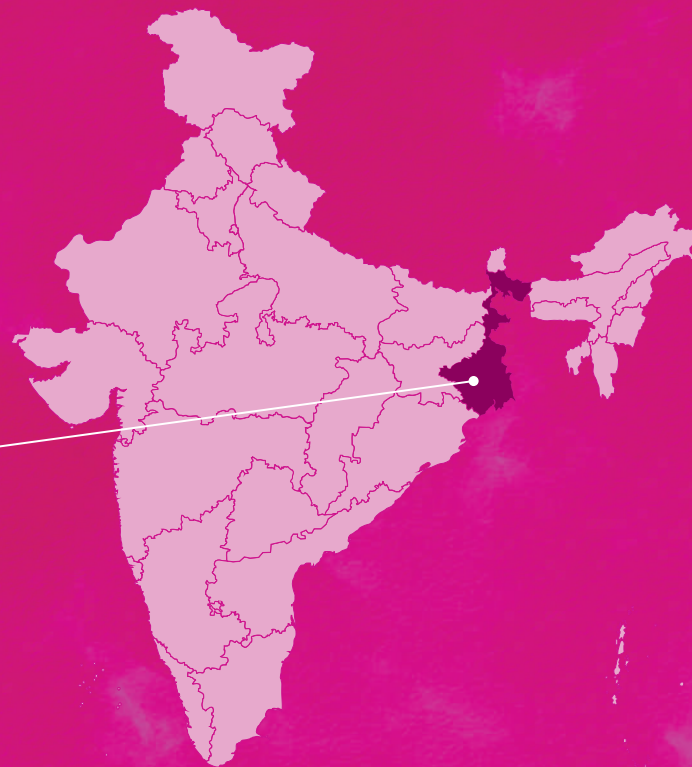
What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

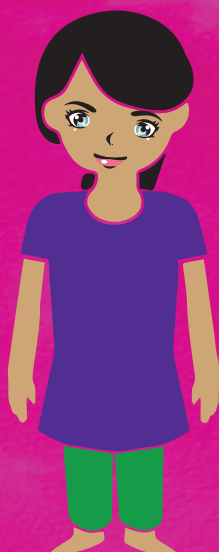
- Takes necessary action against cyber criminals.
- Makes technology affordable and accessible to all.
- Makes IT education an option within formal education.



A Child's Tale of Hunger from West Bengal



This is the story of a young orphaned boy who lived in West Bengal. There was no one to look after him, so he earned his daily wage working as a labourer in a coal mine. He did not go to school and often spent the day hungry or with a half-filled stomach. One day at the coal mine, a huge block of coal fell on him, leading to his instant death inside the mine. Tragically, many such young children are forced to work as labourers to even fill their most basic need for food in India and do not enjoy the right to education.



What children recommend...

That the Government of India:

- Provides ration cards to all households and improves the delivery of services at ration shops while also including pulses and edible oils in the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- Provides an education that is free, compulsory, inclusive and complete.
- Improves the quality and variety of the mid-day meal to make it more nutritious while providing the same on holidays too.



