



MV Foundation's Official Statement for the World Fit for Children(+5) Commemoration based on the Report of the Secretary General *Follow-up to the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children.*

The MV Foundation, India has worked for the past fifteen years towards the elimination of child labour and the universalisation of education by raising awareness amongst communities on the rights of children. Through its efforts over 320,000 children have transitioned out of work and into school through participation in residential bridge camps which prepare them for entry into the appropriate level of school. The MV Foundation participated in the 2002 UN Special Session and finds the Secretary General's follow-up report to be encouraging for the progress it suggests and the challenges it posits. However, significant gaps remain, particularly with respect to the identification of cross-cutting features amongst the four major areas of *A World Fit for Children*.

1. The Secretary General's report places significant emphasis on the "insufficient focus on child protection" (para. 25) and suggests that there need to be stronger links between child protection and the Millennium Development Goals (para. 47) and the fulfillment of human rights (para. 63). We urge Member States to consider the intersection of the focus areas of child protection and education as there is potential for significant progress in identifying the links between them. To this end **we urge Member States to consider the fundamental link between the objectives of eliminating child labour and the universalisation of education.**

2. The report states that the gender parity in primary education is limited and that girls continue to be excluded from primary education (para. 40). The goal of gender parity in education is linked to the problem of child labour. **All policies for universalisation of education must include policies for abolition of child labor in all its forms.** This includes domestic work which employs vast numbers of girls, particularly in South Asia. Early marriage also plays a strong role in the preventing girls from entering and staying in school. **Member States must make all efforts to increase enforcement of minimum age requirements for marriage.**

3. The report also suggests that efforts need to be made to prevent children from dropping out of school (para. 42) and to re-enroll child workers (para. 46). In order to achieve these goals **school policies must be child-friendly.** Every arrangement has to be made to integrate all those who have been left out of the school system to join schools and enter into an age appropriate class. The MV Foundation has found that residential bridge camps that prepare children for the appropriate grade level are very effective in this regard. **Efforts must be made to ensure that school policy shows respect to the first generation learner** with an abundance of flexibility and the removal of all barriers that come in the way of their continuation in school.

4. The report indicated that there has been progress to address domestic child labour and steps to include it on the list of hazardous occupations (para. 50) but this is not sufficient. **All forms of child labour must be made illegal as no form of child labour is justifiable and all forms are preventable.** Governments must take the necessary steps to eliminate all child labour by expanding the definition of child labour to consider **any child out of school to be a child labourer.**

5. The Secretary General's report also calls for strengthened involvement of civil society in the process of monitoring child-related goals (para. 17). **In order to achieve this goal governments must involve civil society in the formation, implementation and monitoring of their programs.** Civil society and government partnerships are vital to achieving greater progress on all of the major areas of *A World Fit for Children*. **Governments must work to improve the capacity of communities to support child rights by engaging them in active involvement.**

6. We urge **Member States to increase cooperation amongst partners within their country and between nations in order to share lessons.** NGOs must also work towards creating lasting partnerships to improve the quality of their work and maintain focus on the goals set out in *A World Fit for Children*. Initiatives such as the Stop Child Labour Campaign have been a tremendous success in this regard.