

ILO AND GIRL CHILD

Written by *Vijayalakshmi Suresh*

Assistant Professor, School of Excellence, TNDALU, Chennai

ABSTRACT

In 1789 William Blake wrote a poem “Chimney Sweeper” in the poem he narrated the dreams of the children under the duress of first industrial revolution. The children of the period worked in the industries but not in their dreams. After 230 years of the poem, International Labour Organization on 12 June 2019 World Day Against Child Labour reversed the poet’s words by declaring “Children should not work on fields, but on dreams”. This article on the event of centenary years of ILO wants to pay tribute to the organization by elaborating the efforts of the institution in saving every “Girl Child” in the earth for its goal of sustainable development. ILO was the first institution seriously addressed the girl child rights and proclaimed “Give Girls A Chance” in its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour”. It insisted the future of a girl child is not only of her but for the future of future generations and it is the duty of all players of the State to come together to safeguard girls from exploitation .The institution through the guidelines ,recommendations and conventions helping the States around the world to provide a safe environment on earth for girl children .With the advent of Fourth industrial revolution the domination of automation everywhere would result in more employment in informal sector, as girls are already facing “double burden” of working in field and at home will be exploited by informal sector and highly skilled digital world. ILO wants to ensure the rights of a “girl child” to live, learn, grow and develop. This article celebrates the effort of ILO towards the rights and the development of Girls.

Keywords: *exploitation, chance, child labour, centenary, industry, dreams, generation, rights*

INTRODUCTION

The universal and the lasting peace can be achieved with the help of Social Justice says the preamble of ILO's Constitution. In 1919, the world was in the grip of wars, the lives of many human beings were sacrificed for a few greedy. The end of the first world war displayed the worst status of the humans. The humanitarian aspect was absolutely at stake with the exploitation of workers to the core. Everywhere poverty, disease, illiteracy etc., engulfed the nations. The success of the first industrial revolution for the few nations drained in the first world war. The Western national leaders realised the need of peace and protection for safeguarding the human race. The total unrest of the world endangered the human species even though the inventions and technology developed during the period for easing the hard work of human beings. The 19th and 20th century witnessed the repercussions of the war and the protests and revolutions of the exploitation of the industrialisation. The world and leaders of the powerful developed nations alarmed that the situation was going out of their control which would result in the destruction of human race. The panic begot the Treaty of Versailles, the birth of League of Nations and the ILO had become the boon for the universe and the human race. The first international institution to lay out guidelines and standards exclusively for the labourers started its journey in the year 1919, a successful hundred years have passed since its inception. The only institution of the world which is continuing its journey for the sake of social and economic justice to protect the labour force of the world. The amazing travel of ILO witnesses the civilization of the universe after two world wars and industrial exploitations. When women came outside of the home to work in substitute for men during the war period, it was the ILO tried to address the issues of women and children at work place.

THE JOURNEY OF ILO FOR THE JUSTICE OF GIRL CHILD

In 1919, the preamble of ILO categorically stated and started by addressing social justice, the universal and lasting peace can be achieved only if it is based on social justice. It also wanted to improve the labour conditions to protect children, women and young children¹. Nearly a hundred years ago an institution which talked about gender and social justice is ILO. The world before 20th century was diversified with various factors but towards gender all were male dominated. The different cultures of the world were against the women empowerment.

Major ILO contribution towards girls are,

In 1900 even before the establishment of ILO an international association of labour legislation was established to protect child labour and promote better working conditions for them. The international community which worried about children and women came forward to organise themselves for the cause of protecting them. In 1905 and 1906 they met to discuss the issues and brought Berne declaration in Switzerland. This was considered to be a pioneer effort of ILO even before its establishment.

In 1919 Paris peace Conference witnessed women delegates gathered for their inclusion in main stream. The World International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was the serious attempt by Women worker's world -wide. The group of women in their 2nd Congress in Zurich, Switzerland, organised and brought a "women charter"ⁱⁱ for themselves for equal rights as men at working place. The women Charter, in 1919 itself stated the rights of women in a clear tone. Some of them are, abolition of child labour other economic benefits to mother workers, equal pay for equal work, banning internationally buying and selling of girls and womenⁱⁱⁱ. The journey has continued with the preamble of the ILO constitution which made social and gender justice is the philosophy behind the establishment of ILO.

In 1919 ILO decided to fight for gender justice it had to address different culture which made girls and women as subaltern. The subaltern rights were so complicated to address in the society. With a lot of courage, it brought many concrete principles for equality. The initial conventions which centred women and children are as follows,

- ❖ Maternity Protection Convention, 1919, No.3,
- ❖ Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919, No.4
- ❖ Minimum age Convention (Industry), 1919, No.5
- ❖ Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1919, No.6.

The above said convention had set the initial labour standards for girl children and women

Philadelphia Declaration ,1944^{iv}

The next important step of ILO is the declaration of Philadelphia, the declaration became the aims and fundamental principles of ILO in the real sense. The first aim in part I stated clearly,

“labour is not a commodity”, labour cannot be separated from a labourer and includes only human not any gender.

Part II(a) says

Irrespective of sex workers should get dignity, equality, economic justice and equal opportunity.

Part III(h) says

Maternity protection and child welfare to be the labour standards.

ILO in its Philadelphia declaration wanted every nation to have all the labour standards to be implemented for civilised and peaceful world.

THE OTHER CONVENTIONS FOR GIRL PROTECTIONS

- ❖ Minimum age to admission of work and employment Convention-C.No.138,1973.
- ❖ Its Recommendation No 146
- ❖ Elimination of worst forms of child labour-C.No.182,1999
- ❖ Its Recommendation No 190^v
- ❖ Revised Maternity Convention-C.No 183^{vi}

The above Conventions categorically stated the need of gender justice in labour standards.

IPEC- International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

A precursor to a strong ideology “give girls a chance by IPEC

International Programme on the elimination of child labour was established in 1992. After its success with more countries, a short-term target was needed by ILO. In 1999 a Convention on elimination of worst forms of child labour (no 182) was brought and some of its goals to eliminate the following,

- ❖ Slavery
- ❖ Child prostitution
- ❖ Trafficking of drugs among children
- ❖ Trafficking children
- ❖ The circumstances which affect moral, health and safety of children^{vii}

The above was ratified by many countries. This was followed by the best initiative and report of IPEC “Give Girls A Chance”

IPEC’S Give Girls a Chance

After 1999, the worst form of labour convention, ILO felt that the issues of girl workers have to be still more effective. It observed the data collected from various nations and found out around the world more than 100 million girl children are involved in the labour force.^{viii}

Their labour are almost hidden or not obvious, involved extra hardship, risks and responsibility. Moreover they are very weak and low skilled but over working. In 2009 ILO declared World day against child labour and proclaimed ‘Give girls a chance’^{ix}. In its report Give girls a chance it answered many questions like,

- ❖ How do the girls get exploited?
- ❖ Why there is a need to focus on girls?
- ❖ Who should take the responsibility to save the girls?
- ❖ How can it be improved?

A detailed report which clearly revealed the world the actions to be taken to save the girls on earth. In the report it says most of the girls’ labour are taken very lightly and never has come to lime light. They have to work both at home and field or work place and are doubly burdened. In the matter of financial crisis or national crisis human -trafficking are very common. They are being bought and sold for the sake of bonded slavery, prostitution or pornography. They are the most vulnerable than the boys. The sexual transmission diseases, abortion, child birth, early labour all engulfed the girl children of the universe. ILO is the only institution in the travel of its 100 years’ journey talked and took measure to bring the need of protecting girl children. In many cultures on the earth consider boys over girls. There is a need to safeguard the girls not only for their future but also future of the future. They are the one meant for reproduction by nature, if their existence gets attacked, destroyed or damaged the whole world will get affected. ILO at right time registered the need of safety of girls. They have to be saved from poverty, illiteracy, labour and all forms of exploitation. ILO wanted the girls to be educated, employed rightly, so that they can marry later and bear healthy children. The children free from labour and exploitation with good nutrition and education will not only produce more goods but also good citizens of nations. ILO places the whole responsibility on the government. It wanted the Government,

1. To coordinate with the employers and insist them to have and follow the labour standards
2. To discuss with the trade unions to be vigilant about the young workers at the the work place
3. To make policies in such a way to balance national and welfare economy
4. To follow the principles of investing on human capital
5. To establish a code of conduct to enforce labour standards to eradicate girl labour exploitation
6. To believe and encourage in tripartite arrangement for the safety of girl children

The above are the suggestions to the policies made by nations.

CONCLUSION

The centenary declaration of ILO for the future of work 2019 “a road map for a human –centred future”^x is the commemoration of its 100 years journey to protect social justice and humanity for peace and harmony of the whole universe. It recognized, revisited and reaffirmed the declaration of Philadelphia ,1944 to have a future of work to be decent with all labour standards. The Decent Work Agenda of ILO includes a vow to remove all sorts of exploitation and discrimination to make the home and work place to be safe for girls.

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^x *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, 2019*, available at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/mission-and-objectives/centenary-declaration/lang--en/index.htm>