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**"Effects of Vocational Training on Working Children in Southern India"**

By

**Jennifer Shortall**

A Practicum Report Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements For  
The Master of Arts in  
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Approved By:

**Dr. Suzanne Dansereau**  
**Supervisor**

**Gerry Cameron**  
**Reader**



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Effects of Vocational Training on Working Children in Southern India**

**By Jennifer Shortall**

Inadequate access to proper forms of education is one of the major problems hampering global efforts to eradicate child labour. In the southern Indian state of Karnataka, the non-governmental organization, Concerned for Working Children, endeavours to provide child labourers with new skills through a specific programme of vocational training, formal education and life skills workshops. Called Namma Bhoomi, meaning "Our Land" in the local Kannada language, this programme provides training so that children can acquire marketable skills and better employment opportunities.

The purpose of this practicum report is to examine the type of education programme offered at Namma Bhoomi and determine what impacts it has had on the lives of child labourers. In order to determine the impact of this alternative education programme upon the children, interviews were conducted to provide insight into the students' perceptions of success and how Namma Bhoomi has assisted them in achieving this success. Interviews were conducted with 60 individuals; graduates, students, drop outs and staff from the programme.

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**RESEARCH AREA: KARNATAKA, INDIA**  
(Rough Guides, 2003 pp.ii-iii)



The area marked in red shows the Indian state of Karnataka, while the red dot on the west coast indicates the location of Kundapur, site of Namma Bhoomi.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The latest global estimates are that 246 million children (one in every six children) are classified as child workers.<sup>1</sup> South Asia holds the largest number of working children in the world with India representing between 13.6 million to 44 million.<sup>2</sup> The majority of children who work are from the lowest caste and do so in order to sustain themselves and their families. They work in factories making matchsticks and fireworks; rolling beedis (cigarettes); selling products on the streets; working on construction sites; selling themselves in prostitution; or being sold into bonded labour.

For the purpose of this paper, child labour is defined as children who are "prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages, under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could open up for them a better future."<sup>3</sup> Child labour is part of a vicious cycle caused by a number of factors, which combine to create an environment conducive to harsh and hazardous working conditions. Children from poor families have low school attendance due to illiteracy and ignorance of the benefits of education. These parents see their children going to school as a loss of income and therefore a waste of time and energy.

These factors combine with several others to propagate child labour: a tradition of children learning the family trade; employers preference for children due to their cheap labour and inability to organize against exploitation; technology; trade union failure to recognize child labourers in order to organize themselves; an ineffective enforcement of the legal provisions pertaining to child labour; an absence of universal compulsory primary education; the non-availability of, and non-accessibility, to schools; an irrelevant and non-attractive school curriculum; and social and cultural environments to produce a reality where it is assumed a child will go to work.<sup>4</sup>

India, like many countries where entrepreneurship is encouraged, relies on the next generation to continue that which has been created by previous generations. With such a massive population, India has a large labour force which it uses to its advantage. This advantage comes in the form of low skilled manual labour, which does not have to be paid a lot of money and therefore means more income for the employers, instead of high skilled technological labour which costs more money to run and less money for the employers. Children can be used for tasks that require brute strength such as rock crushing, or beedi rolling, but are not able to manage operating machinery that requires a higher level of skill. Machinery may get a job done more quickly, but it costs money to purchase and to maintain; however, a child can get the same job accomplished for a much lower cost. Parents who run a machine shop or a fix-it shop look forward to their own children carrying on the trade and ensuring the continual flow of money and the parents' survival. A factory owner or a small

business employs children for a number of reasons. One of the main reasons is that children are not entitled to organize themselves into unions to fight back against exploitation or poor working conditions. As well, most children can be intimidated into doing what an employer wants much more easily than an adult.

Although India is one of the countries that has signed onto the Jomtien Declaration in 1990, the governments are lacking staff and resources to enforce it. Not only do governments have to deal with providing schools but also teachers and staff, equipment and supplies. Within India, caste is very much the centre of all decisions. Depending on the individuals making decisions caste may be a deciding factor in where schools are built and how many resources will be spent on curriculum development. People may try, but they are unable to look after the needs of every Indian child. Throughout all of this the question being asked is where are the adults? In many cases, employers would rather hire children instead of adults. Adults in the same company may have their own unions to guard their interests; however, these unions do not want to assist children to organize themselves or even to represent the interests of children. India has a number of laws that bar the use of children in labour situations; however these are not always effective. It is a mammoth problem to keep track of every child labourer. Individuals that benefit from the labour of children do not want to lose this and will work hard to ensure they do not lose their workers.

These children are condemned to a life of low skilled labour. They receive meager wages and no public support. Despite the fact that child labour is technically illegal in India, no one wishes to enforce the laws that are available to

them. The result is that these children cannot move beyond their low skilled, labour-intensive jobs and will end up bringing up their own children in this sad reality.

India is trying to decrease the number of children who enter the workforce at an early age. To combat child labour and increase awareness, understanding and implementation of the rights of the child, numerous laws and conventions have been drafted, ratified and implemented. Non-governmental organizations working independently and in coalition with the Indian government are working to raise awareness and understanding of the issues surrounding child labour. They look at the causes of child labour as well as the factors and ways in which child labour can be eliminated and the lives of children, their families and communities can be improved. Many NGOs work both within their state and nationally; however, the international push is coming mainly from two organizations: the United Nations (UN) and its agency the International Labour Organization (ILO). Together with governments and NGOs worldwide, these two organizations have implemented many projects and initiatives to see that the rights of children are upheld. One of these rights is the right to education.

In developing countries, child labour is a major deterrent to the acquisition of basic education, which is needed to develop the literacy, numeracy, and life skills required by children to lead healthy, productive lives. Education is seen as one of the most important steps governments can take to eliminate child labour.<sup>5</sup> Educated children tend to have better health, have a broader understanding of their environment and are more likely to use this knowledge to the betterment of

themselves and their communities. Children are empowered by education and its ability to equip them with the skills to advance in their lives. In the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education is seen as not only a right, but also an enabling right.<sup>6</sup> This means that when children learn to read, write, do maths and think for themselves they are then able to take those skills and apply them to all other aspects of their lives. This becomes extremely important when they are interacting with individuals outside of their community and trying to make their own way without being taken advantage.

When education is not universal the end result is usually educational wastage. This is the failure of the state to provide universal education and the achievement of set objectives.<sup>7</sup> Government departments and non-governmental organizations are attempting to reduce educational wastage through the implementation of innovative approaches to schooling. Examples of these alternative approaches to education are, vocational training, bridging programmes, night school, rotational twenty-hour schools, special exams, other non-formal as well as formal education.

Children need to learn new and different skills to be able to adapt and function within an ever-changing society, one which is composed of both highly skilled technical workers and low-skilled manual workers. They learn and acquire new skills through interaction with individuals, organizations and different educational approaches.

One such example is Namma Bhoomi, an alternative educational programme run by the NGO, Concerned for Working Children, which endeavours

to provide children with new skills through vocational training, formal education and life skills workshops. Supporters of vocational programs argue they provide training so that children can acquire marketable skills, which can result in better employment opportunities. In turn this can create improvements within their own families and communities.

Do alternative programmes, such as Namma Bhoomi make a difference in the lives of child labourers? Are alternative streams of education providing child labourers with skill sets that are unavailable through the traditional education system? This case study examines the programme offered at Namma Bhoomi to determine whether or not alternative streams of education, such as vocational training, provide child labourers with better opportunities at success in life?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Child labour is a complex phenomenon that exists in many societies throughout the world. The research problem for this project is the lack of innovative education programmes for child labourers. In order to fully understand why it is a problem there is a need to break the issue into components. These components are: child labour as a global issue, the harm caused by child labour, the laws that should, but do not, prevent it and the need for education, both formal and informal, to provide children with the skills to succeed in life.

The seriousness with which this is a problem is taken is evidence by the work done on improving the lives of children and eradicating child labour by several multi-lateral organizations. This work is taking place in countries in West

Africa where children are working as slaves on cocoa plantations, throughout other countries in Africa where they work as sex slaves, street hawkers, farm hands and domestics. In Latin America children are working on construction sites, on the street and in the homes of many people as domestics. South and Southeast Asia see children working out in the ocean on fishing platforms for weeks at a time. Children are working as bonded labourers in carpet factories, rolling beedis, selling themselves and scavenging through refuse. Child labour is not isolated in these areas, countries like Great Britain, Japan, United States and Canada have children working in the sex trade, as domestics and in sweatshops. It is a global issue that requires many individuals working together.

Child labour is detrimental to human development as it hinders a country's ability to progress and develop.<sup>8</sup> According to Fyfe, Weiner and Burra, child labour is still occurring because government and societies allow it. There is also a lack of implementation of ILO/UN laws and conventions signed by India and the national laws drafted against child labour as well.

To Fyfe, Weiner and Burra, child labour is defined as work that a child (under 14) performs which inhibits their ability to grow, learn and survive. Hazardous activities should not be done by children. One of the difficulties when studying the issue of children's work / child labour is trying to define these terms. The members of Bhima Sangha (a union of working children in Karnataka under the age of 18 years) note that there is a difference between work and labour. The term "child's work" is a positive term, which refers to work a child is capable

of doing. Child labour is a negative term referring to work that overburdens a child.<sup>9</sup>

For every definition identified by an organization, another organization will define it differently to suit their own mission statement. When organizations started to refer to children who worked, they used the term child labour. However, as people acquired better information and understanding about children who worked, it became necessary to create subsections. There was a need to discern between labour that is hazardous and labour that is beneficial; children not in school but not in work, those working for the family business and those that are bonded labourers. This worked up until today when approaches to labour are becoming more and more centred on children and their voice which means that there is also a difference between child work and child labour. The term “child work” implies there is still time to attend school, learn important life skills and socialize with family and friends. “Child labour” on the other hand, refers to children working, full time at an early age, and for too many hours. It is work that exerts undue physical, social, or psychological stress, inadequate pay, work and life on streets in bad conditions, hampers access to education, undermines children’s dignity and self-esteem and is detrimental to full social and psychological development.<sup>10</sup> Child labour is also said to refer to “All economic activities carried out by persons less than fifteen years of age, regardless of their occupational status, (wage earners, own-account workers, unpaid family workers, etc).” This does not include household work performed by them in their parents’ home, except where such work can be assimilated to an economic

activity, for example, when a child must devote his or her entire time to work so that his or her parents can be employed outside the home and is, therefore, deprived of the possibility of going to school.<sup>11</sup>

One of the ways that work is being accomplished is through the drafting of laws and conventions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has set out guidelines and principles, such as the ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138), as well as the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and respective supplementing Recommendations (No.146 and No.190).<sup>12</sup> The ILO Minimum Age Convention 138 and Recommendations 146 (1973) was the first of the agreements which linked education and children's work by recognizing the link between age of primary school completion and minimum employment age. This Convention calls on signatories to raise the minimum age of employment to 16 years of age. By agreeing to this the countries would also be agreeing to no full-time work for children as they are in school until between 12-14 years depending on where they live. Unfortunately, neither Canada nor India has signed onto Convention No. 138 which declares the minimum age for working. To sign on would have an impact on military activities as it involves the age that individuals can volunteer for military service and it is one area that neither country wants to reorganize. Canada had signed onto Convention No.182 in 2000, but India has not. Although they have not ratified the Convention, steps are being taken to review their stance on the Convention.

Both Canada and India have, however, signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child

(CRC) 1989 was the first comprehensive human rights treaty for children. It has almost reached universal ratification. The CRC guarantees that children have the right to be protected from economic exploitation. Governments are obliged to regulate and enforce minimum age, hours and conditions of employment. Children are guaranteed the right to free primary education which provides them with a range of skills and knowledge beyond basic numeracy and literacy. This provides support to the work being undertaken by the UN and NGOs globally to increase pressure on governments to improve the lives of children.

Until poverty is eliminated, many will see child labour as a normal part of life and a necessity. Contrary to those who believe entirely that child labour is detrimental, others (ILO/UN/Save the Children) see it as a necessity because basic needs are currently not being met. They view child labour as work done by children under the age of 14 that is hazardous to their health, growth and life. The reason behind the existence of child labour is not just one, but a myriad of reasons such as: poverty, lack of education, ill health and a lack of awareness of other options that would be exercised. They argue child labour could be eliminated through the improvement of people's economic status, education systems and accessibility, implementation of laws and conventions signed by the state and an increased awareness and understanding that children are not required to work.

Countries such as Great Britain and the United States have implemented laws against child labour in the late 1800s and early 1900s, in part due to public pressure to remove children from the workforce and put them into school. Since

then there has been interest in the issue, however academics became involved in the children's issues in the 1970's. It was at this point that individuals, the media, NGOs and international organizations began to share knowledge about child labour and to raise public awareness and pressure governments and companies to halt the use of child labour. In the U.S., Senator Tom Harkin proposed a bill to boycott goods produced in Bangladesh by children. Although the unintended economic consequences were disastrous as children were forced from the various businesses and out into the street to become involved with more hazardous activities, for example drugs, sex trade and other street activities. It did raise the public's interest in the rights of the child. It also assisted individuals such as Iqbal (a bonded Pakistani carpet weaver) who escaped his owner and became an advocate for child labourers in South Asia. Although there have been stories about other child labourers, Iqbal was the first bonded child labourer to come forth and speak out to the international community about the plight of other children trapped in hazardous working conditions. When he was murdered his life story brought even more press to the issue of child labourers. Iqbal's work was noticed by a Canadian, Craig Keilburger, who carried on the message about child labourers after his death through Craig's non-profit organization Free the Children in Canada.

The current discourse on child labour is that it is undesirable and in an ideal world all of its forms would be deemed illegal.<sup>13</sup> International organizations, such as South Asian Children's Coalition, Butterflies, Anti-Slavery, Casa Alianza, CWC, work to ensure that children have a voice and options on the direction of

their lives. In many cases members of these and other organizations are working against the wishes of employers and some unscrupulous individuals. These people benefit from the use of children's labour and will use any means to ensure that they do not lose their labour force and this can mean violent actions against the members of the organizations. By working with children and their families many organization's are able to bring the plight of children to the public and government's attention and bring about changes to public understanding and legislation so that it helps families in need and children wanting different options.

An important part of change is education which these organizations support through the financing of local initiatives and programmes to build schools and strengthen education systems. According to these groups education is realized in a number of ways, one being vocational training. Vocational training gives children a structure and training in skills where they might have background information, and results in superior skills which lead to better paying employment opportunities due to the existence of certificates they receive at the end of their training.

Education provides children with opportunities both in the short term and the long term. Chakravarty in 1989 demonstrated that children who have received education are healthier and have better communication skills. Children who attend school until they complete their basic education, (around the age of 14) or even those who attend for a few years are better informed and more fluent verbally. They participate in community affairs, are open to new ideas and experiences, and show more concern for others.<sup>14</sup>

The focus of this case study, the NGO, Concerned for Working Children (CWC), believes that with very few exceptions, most families would like to withdraw their children from work, even those who are extremely poor.<sup>15</sup> CWC stresses the need to make working children and their predicament visible to the public and government and explore reasons/factors for their problems and give the children, their families and communities a political space to assert their rights.<sup>16</sup> Child labourers do not always have the opportunity to attend formal schooling. When they do and it is a positive experience, they benefit greatly from the increased knowledge and theoretical skills training. There is a large group of children who for a variety of reasons are working without access to schools or have dropped out, who could benefit from the education. This is where it is necessary to look at alternative types of education. Alternative types of education can be formal schooling that is altered to suit the purposes of a population, it can be non-formal education that travels to where the children are in an effort to educate them. All of these options provide children with the chance to learn skills and training, be it theoretical or practical. In some cases, children are able to start with a practical form of education. This next section will look at the different forms of education available to child labourers and look at what works for their situation.

## **Education**

The ILO has always seen education as one of the main ways to abolish child labour. Education increases one's chances of finding employment with higher wages that lead out of poverty into economic and social mobility. On the social side, increased education results in lower birth rates as women focus on improving their education rather than becoming pregnant. Various studies have demonstrated that when women are educated, knowledge is spread throughout their families which leads to an increase in the number of girl children entering and staying in school. All of these results show an improvement in family's welfare, health and understanding of political and human rights. Populations which have higher levels of education are also seen as a higher skilled and better qualified workforce.<sup>17</sup> They see setting minimum ages for compulsory education as the way to eliminate child labour. They site global examples such as the United States, United Kingdom and Japan where child labour numbers decreased with the onset of compulsory education.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states there is to be universal education for all children. One hundred and ninety three countries have ratified this convention.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, not all of those countries have actually implemented the Convention.

Education has been defined as any deliberate process, which enhances the problem solving powers of learners.<sup>19</sup> Education comes in a number of forms; formal, which is a highly structured curriculum based teaching method

which takes a set period of time to finish. It makes use of learning modules designed to permit individualized instructions that progresses at the learners pace.<sup>20</sup> Non-formal which is more structured to the person rather than person structured to the establishment. Non-formal education is shorter in duration and limited to specific practical types of knowledge. This type of education enables child workers to catch up with their peers.<sup>21</sup> It includes elements of consciousness-raising, value formation and motivation, skills training and community organization and leadership development.<sup>22</sup> Vocational training can be very formal as well. Finally, informal education allows a person learn without consciously looking for the education.

Vocational training, which is type of formal education, is one way to provide children with skills and training to survive and excel in life.<sup>23</sup> Formal education provides another set of skills and knowledge different from vocational. However, it is not always possible for children to obtain formal schooling. Within academia and non-governmental organizations, there is a prevailing belief that non-formal education is substandard. It does not provide children with the structure of formal education and therefore restricts the ability of people to gain advancement in society. Non formal education is seen as yet another way to provide scraps of knowledge to children.<sup>24</sup> It also fosters the split found in Indian society where certain systems, such as education, health, welfare are for one level or caste and the other systems are for other levels or castes. It can be seen as reinforcing already existing divisions in Indian society and those who take non-formal training continue to be seen as inferior to those in formal education.

Burra recognizes that education is not perfect and requires much work to strengthen it in order to make it applicable and accessible to all children. The students that can afford it attend full time formal schooling and those that cannot, have to settle for the non-formal system where teachers may not be as proficient.<sup>25</sup>

In order to work education needs to be flexible, accessible, and affordable and offer a curriculum appropriate to the needs of low-income children. Montessori education is an approach to formal schooling which allows children to learn at their own pace and to be flexible in their learning. This technique believes that education should fully develop children's positive potentials and that the student and the teacher should work together. If the curriculum is created in such a way that it suits the student's nature and inclinations then it is successful. Many schools around the world are based on the Montessori approach and many organizations use some of the basics of this education to create their own programmes.<sup>26</sup> Montessori said that the "first part of the adult's life is the builder of the adult."<sup>27</sup> The Montessori system integrates work concepts and skills from the very beginning of their programme.<sup>28</sup> An education that helps children to develop their skills so that they become stronger, better adults is a benefit for society. Education should fully develop children's positive potentials.<sup>29</sup> As well, children must want to attend school and must identify with the objectives and context of education as coinciding with their aspirations.<sup>30</sup>

Along with creating security and instilling confidence in children, education can also be extremely empowering. Pedagogical approaches, such as

Montessori, revolve around the idea of children taking part in their learning and participating. Participation empowers. If you build skills and confidence children will have the power to direct their lives. When people feel as if they have a say in what happens in their life and can participate in it they are more dedicated to the end result. The same can be said of children. They know and understand what is occurring in their lives more so than the adults they encounter daily.

One school of thought emphasizes the importance of participation. Roger Hart introduced an eight step process to detail the contribution of young people's participation. It is called "Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation".<sup>31</sup> In it there are eight steps divided into two groups: one which is not considered participatory and the other which is participatory. The first step begins with manipulation of children to promote a cause, which they may know very little about. This extends to the step where children are assigned certain roles in a project or cause and are informed as to how they can be effective and why they are involved. The last group of steps shows an increase in children's participation and input into a project. This increase moves to a point whereby children initiate and direct and bring adults into a project rather than being invited themselves.

The Ladder of Participation is a way to assess how much participation an organization is actually using in their positions. Many organizations claim there is full participation between both adult and child, but, as is shown, this might not be the entire case. Another example of participation is a modification on how each situation can fall within a particular scenario but not necessarily a stage.

Children can be seen as being unable to succeed and therefore most are manipulated. At the other end is the scenario whereby both adults and children work together in a partnership. This final type of relationship is time extensive and must pool respective strengths to achieve a common objective.<sup>32</sup> Children's participation happens when the children are empowered. In order to achieve this, there are three essential elements required: an organization or forum; access to, and use of, relevant information; and access to resources (structural, material, human and financial).<sup>33</sup>

As well, the ILO sees non-formal, vocational, and formal as three different phases of a process necessary to educate a child. They have found, through their work and research, that in countries where child labour occurs there are usually policies and programmes that have failed working children. These include a lack of access to education and poor quality education where it does exist. The ILO works to improve these policies through conventions such as Convention 138 and trying to have the school leaving age the same as the minimum working age. As well, the ILO is a strong advocate for Education for All, which is an international programme to educate all children with the hope of eliminating child labour and developing vocational skills training, improving teachers technical skills in order to work more effectively with students.

The Education for All campaign was the main topic at the international conference in Jomtien, Thailand, 1990, where the Jomtien Declaration was drafted. The Jomtien Declaration, also known as the UNESCO World Declaration of Education for All was prepared by 1500 participants from 155 nations and

dozens of NGOs. This group set a target year of 2000 for universal education to occur. Since then the target has been extended to 2015. By agreeing to this Declaration the group was recognizing that education is a fundamental right and necessity for all human and national development. It also broadened the definition of education, as it recognized that not all learning occurs within the confines of the classrooms as there is also an ability to learn through vocational training and non-formal educational activities such as the organizations that bring school to street children instead of children going to school. This is called the moveable classroom.

The advocates of the rights-based approach to education state that "quality education is child-centred, prepares children for the challenges they face in life and helps every child reach his or her potential. Quality education is not only concerned with learning, but also with the child's health, nutritional status, well being, safety and protection from abuse and violence.<sup>34</sup> These points will be examined more closely in other sections of this report.

Education is seen as promoting social and economic mobility, as well as, informing children of the risks of work, their rights in general, and empowers them to stand up for themselves in cases of abuse and exploitation. It can also provide them with viable alternatives to the drudgery of inappropriate work.<sup>35</sup> In Columbia, the NGO Escuela Nueva worked out a new system whereby children are able to leave school during peak agricultural periods to work and return afterwards and catch up on the information they have missed. This information is presented in a very practical manner, which is easier for them to absorb. In Peru,

a programme between UNICEF and the National Institute for Family Well-Being instead of bringing children to schools brought the schools to street children. This idea of street educator, pioneered in Latin America has resulted, in the reintegration of 1,200 street children back to school. The idea of street educators reintegrating children back to school is not the only option for children. In the Philippines, the National Project on Street Children has worked on various methods, such as mobile schools, and back to school programmes to over 60,000 street and working children across 23 cities and 9 municipalities.<sup>36</sup> Education can create “a zone of security for children” as it provides children with a sense of confidence in themselves, family and community.<sup>37</sup> Indian parents are beginning to see the benefits of an education even if their children fail to show up regularly or are unable to attend school.

With the background information provided by the literature review I was able to proceed with my research and research if Namma Bhoomi’s vocational training programme is successful with the students and the reasons behind its success.

## METHODOLOGY

This research, which looks at the question of whether or not alternative streams of education are providing child labourers with currently unavailable skills sets was conducted through the Concerned for Working Children’s programme Namma Bhoomi. Research took place at their head office in

Bangalore and rural resource centre in Kundapur, both in the state of Karnataka, India. The Saint Mary's Ethics committee granted approval for this research.

The NGO, Concerned for Working Children in Bangalore, Karnataka, India is one organization which works on both child labour and education issues and it is here that the theoretical aspect of this research was conducted. CWC works on the belief that children have the right to learn and obtain the skills, thereby giving them options to remove themselves from the cycle of child labour. The practical aspect of this research was conducted through CWC's programme Namma Bhoomi, a rural resource centre in Kundapur, Karnataka. Namma Bhoomi provides ex-child labourers with vocational and educational training through child centred methodologies to improve the lives of the children and their families. The programme's vision is for a world where all children can have access to an all encompassing form of education which is in keeping with their age, gender and ability. The criteria being studied is to measure the rate of success based upon the graduates and current students perception of their own success and Namma Bhoomi's success.

Namma Bhoomi is part of the rural program, Gramashrama, at CWC. Namma Bhoomi ("Our Land" in the Kannada language) provides vocational training including formal education and life skills to ex-working children in order to enhance their self-sustainability and that of the region.

This research project relies on verbal evidence gathered in the field as well as primary and secondary resources. The Concerned for Working Children

and Namma Bhoomi both provided written documentation. Pamphlets, newspaper articles, magazine articles and policy and program documents provided information on the structure, origins and work of the CWC and school. The news and magazine articles were useful in that they provided information on the views of the community on Namma Bhoomi and CWC programs. Institutions such as the ILO, UN and Human Rights Watch, and NGOs such as MV Foundation, SACCSS and Anti-Slavery were canvassed for documents on child labour and education programs addressing the issue to obtain information on their policies and programming on child labour and specifically in India.

Primary data collection was essentially qualitative. Open ended questions were used in the interview to determine the participant's knowledge of Namma Bhoomi and its programmes. It also allowed the researcher to talk face to face with participants. This method enabled the researcher to ask more probing questions and to clarify certain points. Since participants were taking time out of their daily schedule to talk with the researcher, there was room for flexibility, if the interview was interrupted. I was fortunate enough to have a translator who came from the same area where we were conducting research and could speak the language and understand the local customs and phrases that some of the participants used during the interviews. (See Appendix 1)

Four sets of questions were created to acquire information from the participants regarding their experiences before, during and after Namma Bhoomi. All participants were asked how they had heard of Namma Bhoomi and why they

chose to attend training or to work there. The information gathered through this question provides an idea of how children and families discovered Namma Bhoomi and how community members perceived the school. If community members and family members promote Namma Bhoomi, it shows an acceptance of the program. Communities or individuals do not normally promote activities or organizations that they do not like or approve.

To understand the trades students were pursuing, they were asked what trade they started in and in what trade they graduated. As no organization or institution wants to stagnate, one of the questions asked was what changes or improvements the participants would make to Namma Bhoomi. As every generation of students views their school differently, the improvement or changes would also be different. The first group of students who took training at Namma Bhoomi did so with little idea of what to expect beyond their own dreams for the centre. Each class to come afterwards arrived with some idea of what to expect because of information gained from Bhima Sangha members they knew, current/past students who might have been family or friends, staff and Namma Bhoomi's reputation. As well, as CWC's other programmes have been implemented, changes were occurring in panchayats (local governments). The number of children was decreasing, but the demand for vocational training persisted. However, children were entering without work experience and therefore their expectations were different. As well, there would hopefully be a difference between ideas given from people who graduated 15 years ago and those currently studying at the school. The follow up would also be to see

whether the suggestions of change had been accepted at Namma Bhoomi. This also provides information into the level of power children had in the institution. At the beginning there was no firm idea how to determine or measure this; however, it was assumed that some students would have more power than others. This would become apparent when I assessed the information and see if the school had made any improvements to the curriculum or buildings.

The final question relates to success. In order to determine the usefulness of vocation education, this project examined the success of Namma Bhoomi's programmes. I worked with the idea that success depended on whether or not Namma Bhoomi graduates found work that paid more than before entering the programme. By using this idea of success, I was able to see if the student's time at Namma Bhoomi was more beneficial than not going to school at any time or by going to a traditional school. If graduates were able to find work that paid them better than what they received prior to Namma Bhoomi and if they were able to obtain work with advancement and/or stability I saw it as a success. The answers given by each participant would provide information as to whether or not Namma Bhoomi was successful at educating children and enabling them to find work.

Participants can feel slightly intimidated by one to one questions coming from a stranger. It takes a little bit longer for people to relax and warm up. The types of questions chosen were open questions, which provided the participants with a chance to expand on the information being provided. They could give their opinion as well as corroborating information to support their answers. Their

answers also created a picture of the life they lived prior to coming to Namma Bhoomi. In total, 64 interviews were conducted; these included 20 current students, 20 graduates, 20 staff and 4 drop outs. It was hoped that there would be an equal number for all groups, but it was difficult to coordinate and locate drop outs. Due to the fact that many of the students who left Namma Bhoomi returned to their communities or moved on, it was difficult to contact them. The drop outs contacted live in or around Sirsi approximately 3 hour drive from Kundapur. (See Appendix 2)

Working in a foreign country and language proved slightly problematic at the beginning of the project. It was difficult to understand body language, verbal tones and cues between the participant, the translator and myself. Near the end of the research, we all worked extremely well with each other and if a question was not being understood, we were able to work together to provide the necessary translation so that the question would be answered. When it came to the children, it was actually relatively easy to talk with them. Some questions were difficult at first and needed to be expanded upon in order to acquire the information. My translator, who was from the area, was also able to provide information and insight into non-verbal communication that was occurring.

The staff was interviewed to provide the overall picture of the organization. The graduates, from the different years and trades, would provide a picture from the non-administrative side. Graduates can talk about how beneficial they found the training, the changes it has made in their lives and from that the lives of their families and / or communities. The current students provided information on the

present day status of the program, which could then be used as a comparison against the graduate's information. Those who did not continue with the program would be able to provide information that others may not have contributed, such as why they did not complete the program, what steps were taken to avoid them leaving school, what has occurred in their life since leaving Namma Bhoomi and suggestions they may have for the entire program.

There was an opportunity to interview three girls from the tailoring class who are about to graduate. They met with me during the day to discuss their experiences at Namma Bhoomi and their plans for the future. Although boys have graduated from this class, there were none registered at the present moment. Five boys from the electrical class took the time to meet with me and talk about their experiences. Both the computer and hospitality training are new courses and as such did not have graduates to speak with, but did have current students. All were girls and were able to discuss their experiences at Namma Bhoomi and their plans for when they finish. There was the opportunity to interview graduates from all of the other training classes. There was one boy and seven girls from tailoring, seven boys and two girls from construction, one boy from electrical, two from carpentry, one boy and one girl from weaving and one boy from pottery.

Both group and individual interviews were conducted with students. These interviews allowed me to identify any overlap of information which occurred between the participants. It enabled me to see where groups of people provided

similar information and, determine if anything could be inferred from it. Before each interview commenced I provided an explanation of the project and how the information was going to be used. It was explained that the interview was entirely voluntary and that the participant could stop the interview at any time. The participants were asked if they had any questions about the project and interviews and were required to sign a consent form, which was explained to them in Kannada. At the end of each interview participants were asked if they had any questions for me. Many of the participants were curious about why I was at Namma Bhoomi and wanted to know about life back in Canada. One group, in particular, engaged in a lively discussion about home economics in Canada in comparison to India.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA**

Within this chapter, the discussion will focus more closely on the issues of child labour in India: the acquiring of education, poverty, exploitation, and, the definition of child labour according to children. It will cover the development of child labour and education legislation current in place. The discussion will investigate the work of the Indian government and the NGOs that are working on this issue throughout the country. There will be a focus on The Concerned for Working Children and its rural resource program, Namma Bhoomi, in Karnataka, India. The last section of this chapter will focus on the findings of the research, the responses provided by all of the participants and an analysis of the findings. All will provide an answer into whether or not vocational training provides children with the skills and opportunities to succeed in life.

In India, the number of child labourers ranges from 13.4 million to 44 million. There are debates as to the exact numbers as many children are invisible either because of the type of work they do – as domestics, or working in mines, or prostitutes – or because their employer deliberately hides them when investigators come around.

Children work in all sectors of society. They work in construction, hotels, restaurants, mines, carpet makers, manufacturing (beedis, firecrackers, gem polishing, matchstick), sex trade, farms and as domestics. These are the major

sectors that they work in, however, within each of these sectors there are multiple sub sectors.

Child labourers in India, like the rest of the world work for reasons such as financial difficulties in families. They are working to provide money so that the family can survive, pay off debts and bring other family members out of bondage due to debts. Financial difficulties bring about poverty which in many cases can bring about poor health because one may work in a health hazardous sector and is unable to afford medical care. Children will be sent to work to cover for those that are unable to bring in an income. Lack of education is another reason why children are sent to work. There is a thought that children especially lower caste children do not require an education because all they are good for is working in their particular sector. With an education these same children might be able to acquire employment for themselves or their elders in a higher paying, safer environment which would result in a lesser need for other siblings to go to work. Together the family would be able to see other options, other than work to send their children to do.

This idea that children do not need to be educated because they will be going into their designated task is based on the ancient system of caste. Caste exists within Hindu India and runs through all levels of society. Therein lies the crux of the problem, because it is so integrated into the psyche of society. Although society may see child labour as a problem they do not have a problem with a 12 year old serving them tea or a child digging ditches because that is their role in life.

Caste refers to the Hindu social class that people are born into which is ranked according to ritual purity. It is divided into four sections and from there into multiple subsections. The four main sections are brahim, ksatriya, vaishya, and sudra. Brahim refers to the intellectuals and priests, ksatriya are the warriors and the administrators, vaisya are the business group and the sudra assist all of the above groups.

Members of the lowest caste are referred to as "dalits, untouchables or according to the Government of India, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes." Caste denotes not only where in society an individual exists, but also the type of work they may perform. To attempt to move beyond this is not allowed or generally accepted. Unlike western society which sees a person as always being able to move up or down in society, the caste system frowns upon this.

People work according to their caste and there is very little chance of ever moving beyond that which was dictated before one was born. Caste dominates in many areas and children are forced into trades because it is expected of them. It is socially unacceptable for them to undertake any other activity. Nowadays there are changes in society and room is being made in government positions for dalits and women but it is a slow process.

This last group are more commonly referred to as the lowest caste, the dalits or in politically terms, the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The individuals who are born into this caste are usually destined to a life of misery. They perform the activities that the rest of society feels are beneath them. Many of these activities are hazardous, unhealthy and dangers. Dalits clean the latrines

with little or no tools. They work in construction in the lowest of tasks. They gather the garbage and pick through it for any items that can be salvaged for personal use or sale. They are also the caste whose children end up working as domestics, slaves, prostitutes, construction workers, quarry workers, street workers, scavengers and hotel and restaurants labourers.

In some cases, individuals are converting from Hinduism to another religion or if they are able to move out of India to another country where caste does not exist in order to live a life with greater options. The other option that is present within Indian society is for Hindu members to work together without caste being an issue and try to find ways in which society can change.

India has a difficult time implementing its laws regarding child labour in a consistent nationwide way. Within Indian laws, there are a number of loopholes, which make it easy for individuals and companies to obtain the services of children for little or no money. There is a promise of money but it does not always materialize. India creates laws at a national level, but allows them to be implemented at a state level. This results in various states deciding where and if they want to put laws into effect and enforce them. The inconsistency makes it more difficult to have a strong case against child labour when each state has a different stance on the issue.<sup>38</sup>

Some Indian academics have come out against child labour and lament the Indian government's stance on the issue. Their explanation for child labour is that "child labour is a result of exploitation of the weak and vulnerable and it is always the poorest sections of the society who are most vulnerable to this

exploitation".<sup>39</sup> One does not see child labourers emerging from families of the rich or highly educated (unless there are extenuating circumstances, i.e. emergencies or chronic crises), but one does see children from the lower classes and those who have not benefited from acquiring a full education. They do not have other options; they do not have the ability to see anything but that which is before them. With increased literacy and knowledge, there is an ability to view other options.

Since the late 1800s, India has enacted many laws and acts to protect children and ensure that they are not put into danger. Many of these laws were adapted from labour laws in place to protect the interests of adult workers. However these laws did not necessarily improve the lives of children. In 1881, when children did not have a strong place in society, the *Factories Act* declared the minimum age of employment of children in factories as 7 years. It also prohibited employment in two factories on the same day and stated that the workday was not to exceed nine hours with at least four holidays a month. This Act was revised over the next fifty years until the minimum age reached 17 years in 1931, but that was only for night work (which lasted twelve hours).<sup>40</sup> Special legislation was designed for the mining sector. Once the government had outlined the rules for working in factories, they turned their attention to the mines. The *Mines Act* came into effect in 1901 and prohibited anyone less than 12 years of age to work above or below ground in the mines. This was revised over the next forty years until the minimum age of work was raised to 16 years with a surgeon's certificate of physical fitness.

The first Indian Education Commission in 1882 attempted to adopt a law for universal education, but it was denied because of financial and administrative issues. In March 1910, Gopal Krishna Gokhale made the first actual move for education with a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council, but it was rejected. In 2001, the Ninety Third-Amendment Bill made free and compulsory education for children a fundamental right. The State is obligated to provide it and, if it does not, then a person can seek “constitutional remedies against the State for these violations.”<sup>41</sup> The cost and spatial magnitude combined with the loopholes in the bill make it extremely difficult for all children in India to succeed in acquiring free and compulsory education. The government must work more closely with the communities to see that education is brought to all children. There also has to be a concerted effort made to ensure that the lack of motivation within both parents and students is eliminated.<sup>42</sup>

In 1933, the Indian government proposed new legislation the *Children (Pledging of Labour) Act* which states it is illegal to pledge a child's labour to someone else. A bonded labourer is a child who is pledged against a loan or an agreement between a child (or in most cases parents / guardians) and the employer whereby the child will work throughout their life (or until the loan is paid off) in exchange for money or food.<sup>43</sup> This act prohibits the pledging of children making it illegal for parents to receive an advance of money by pledging the labour of their children, a system akin to bonded labour. Bonded children can be found in every state in India. They usually work as carpet weavers, domestics,

farm help, sex workers and many other activities. In many cases they live outside the public eye, it therefore makes it very difficult to count them for government purposes or help them escape. Individuals who work for organizations whose main purpose is to assist children in leaving bonded situations and going back home or to rehabilitation centres, such as SACCS know where bonded children live and also have a wide network of sources to assist them in finding these children and then preparing for their escape.

The *Employment of Children Act 1938* was passed in order to implement the Convention adopted by the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of ILO (1937), which had inserted a special article on India stating that “Children under the age of thirteen years shall not be employed or work in the transport of passengers, or goods, or mails by rail or in handling of goods at docks, quays, or wharves, but excluding transport by hand. Children under the age of fifteen years shall not be employed or work.” This Act raised the minimum age of handling goods on docks from twelve to fourteen years. Finally, in 1986, the *Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act* (CLPRA) was implemented. The CLPRA is an outcome of various recommendations made by a series of committees. It bans the employment of children (those who have not completed their fourteenth year), in specified occupations and process. It regulates the conditions of work in children in employment where they are not prohibited from working. Part A of this Act lists the occupations connected with: (1) transport of passengers, goods or mail by railway, (2) cinder picking, clearing, of an ash pit or building operation in the

railway premises or (6) work relating to selling of crackers and fireworks in shops with temporary licenses. Within Part B, the following processes are listed: beedi making, carpet weaving, cement manufacture, including bagging of cement; cloth printing, dyeing and weaving, manufacture of matches, explosives and fireworks, etc for a greater list of what is covered under this particular Act refer to CLPRA 1986 Section 3 Part A and Part B.<sup>44</sup>

Some of the other issues that are causing delays in India successfully implementing child labour legislations have to do with the number of loopholes within the legislation, especially in India's large informal sector. The informal sector in India is immense and this makes it very difficult to enforce child labour legislation. It is hard to penalize organizations and individuals because businesses keep moving around and changing addresses making it difficult to locate and charge them. One of the loopholes within the *Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986* (CLPRA) is that family ventures do not need to be registered; therefore what inspectors discover when investigating claims of child labour are businesses that are run by families and the children are family members. This, unfortunately, is not always correct, but is difficult to prove if there are no certificates or if the child is a niece/nephew from a different state. Two major loopholes within CLPRA are that there is not a minimum age of employment unless the job is categorized as hazardous and there is no clear, concrete definition on what is entailed in a hazardous job.<sup>45</sup>

One way that some of these legislation loopholes are being addressed is through the work of NGOs. NGOs have played a major role in raising the awareness of the public towards child labour and child rights. Working alone or in coalitions, NGOs have studied the working and living conditions of child labourers and presented this information to government bodies and to the public in order to raise awareness and funds.<sup>46</sup> These studies have taken the form of interviews, questionnaires, direct observation and interaction with children and their families, meeting with panchayats, governments, teachers and businesses. NGOs have started numerous interventions in the areas of counselling, awareness raising, social mobilization, encouraging community participation, releasing children from work, providing vocational training, enrolling children in schools and ensuring their retention, monitoring the functioning of schools, preparing educational kits, and facilitating interaction between the various stakeholders like government officials, teachers and employers.<sup>47</sup>

The South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), in collaboration with government officials, conducts raids on sites where children are employed in intolerable conditions. Two thousand child labourers took part in a 3-kilometre walk in Kolkata, India on Child Labour Day. On February 5, 1998, street plays were organized to target upcoming polls. In the plays, slum children, demanded "basic amenities, abolition of child labour and recognition of primary education as a fundamental right."<sup>48</sup>

The NGO, Butterflies, based in Delhi, works with children to provide them with skills needed to help move beyond the life they currently live. As individuals, in India, children under the age of 15 are not allowed to belong to a trade union. This NGO assisted fifty children in forming Bal Majdoor Union on August 24, 1994. Bal Majdoor took their petition to the Supreme Court where it was rejected but not before the Supreme Court issued notices to the Centre, the registrar of trade unions and the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. Within these notices, the Supreme Court highlighted that there were 18 million working children in India who were not organized, and did not have proper rules of employment, working hours or health facilities.<sup>49</sup> The effect on the groups given this notice is not stated, however it can be assumed the organizations could no longer ignore the working child. The view of the working child had to change and Butterflies works with the community and children to see that this happens.

Another organization in India that works against the use of children in labour is Rugmark, which is against the use of children in the making of hand, knotted carpets. It has taken steps to remove children from carpet factories and provide them with access to rehabilitation centres where they may start or complete their education.

While it has increasingly limited formal child labour, the Indian government has also made education compulsory. Article 21A, which was introduced in November 2001 in the 93<sup>rd</sup> Amendment in the Constitution of India, further states that children between the ages of six to fourteen shall have free and

compulsory education.<sup>50</sup> Since the beginning of their five-year plans in 1947, the government has increased spending on elementary education.<sup>51</sup> The Indian government has always seen education as a key element in the National Policy on child labour, but feels that it is not possible to impose compulsory education because poor families have no choice but to rely on the labour and income of their children.<sup>52</sup>

However, even with the increase in spending, India has not attained universal education. There are still 100 million children not in school.<sup>53</sup> Three main reasons are at the centre of this. One is poverty and the inability of parent's to pay the school fees and other associated costs such as textbooks and uniforms. The second reason relates to poor school quality and infrastructure. Schools are not built in every town or panchayat and sometimes where they are built the social distance is farther than the physical distance for students. The social distance refers to underprivileged, low caste children not able to attend schools with high caste children. Schools in many cases have poor curriculums, teachers and materials. In order to improve this, there is a need to improve things all together rather than separately. This means that instead of trying to build a school in every town and panchayat there is a need to improve the quality of schools, teachers and materials and social problems together. The final point relates to motivation, which has been discussed earlier. This motivation refers to both parents, who do not see the benefits of education and children who may not want to return to school or ever attend school because it is not challenging or it is humiliating for them to sit in classroom divided by caste issues.

For all of the laws and regulations that the Indian Government has drafted and implemented, child labour and the lack of education for a majority of children is rampant. With a population of over 1 billion people, 25 states and the majority of its citizens living in rural areas, trying to successfully implement a policy throughout India has proven extremely difficult. Linguistic and religious differences as well as different understandings of what a child is, have led to further difficulties. Furthermore, communities throughout the country and in every state work differently depending on the religious make up and the castes system. This is not to say that nothing is being accomplished, but progress is slow.

The Indian national government, in connection with their state government partners, have been attempting for the last hundred years to improve the situation for the country's children. Legislation has been passed to ensure that children are not forced to work in any area but especially hazardous areas. Policies are in place to see that children can go to school and obtain an education. All of these pieces of legislation and policy originate at a national level but are implemented at a state level. This results in a slowing down of implementation. There is a desire to improve the lives of children but there is a lack of resources, motivation and unfortunately caste prejudices which result in action only taking place in some sections of the country. This as well is changing through the intervention of NGOs and the children themselves standing up for themselves and their families. It is a slow process that has encountered a number of hindering issues but children are persevering because they are

determined to have a life that works for them not hinders them. The next section of this report looks at one organization and their programme in Karnataka, India, that is designed around the wishes of children and their families to assist the children in acquiring the skills to obtain better opportunities in life.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **NAMMA BHoomi - A Case Study of Vocational Training**

#### **THE CONCERNED FOR WORKING CHILDREN (CWC)**

The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) works on the understanding that children deserve options and skills in order to break out of the cycle. It believes that children should not be working, but there are cases where there is no other choice. Its programmes are implemented in several urban and rural districts of Karnataka. The state of Karnataka is located in south India covering 192,000 square kilometres with a population of 52.73 million and its capital is the city of Bangalore.<sup>54</sup>

CWC has a clearly articulated philosophy which directs all of their programs. It provides support to those that are working through Bhima Sangha (a union of working children) and self help groups and classes (bridging classes), as well as centres, such as Namma Bhoomi for vocational and education training for those that want to leave work altogether.<sup>55</sup> Their purpose is to improve life for working children and their families using child centered methodology.

The issues of child labour and education go hand in hand with each other and organizations that work on one issue tend to address the other as well. CWC is one such organization. In 1985, after working with children for a few years, CWC officially registered as an NGO and was one of the first organizations in India to work exclusively on the issue of child labour and children's rights. It

partners with working children, their families and communities and local governments to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable, and appropriate solutions.<sup>56</sup>

Since 1980, CWC has fostered a better understanding of the problems of working children and advocates working with them and listening to what they have to say. CWC is working to ensure all children are respected as citizens and abled protagonists, who realize, experience and practice all their rights through participation. The organization advocates responsible partnerships between adults and children to establish and maintain a secular, equitable, just, non-exploitative world where there is no discrimination based on ethnicity, caste, religion, gender and language where all life coexists in harmony with nature and resources are used in a sustainable and needs-based manner.<sup>57</sup> The definition of participation it uses refers to individuals who all work towards a common goal with varying degrees of hierarchy. Partnership refers to people who work towards a common goal with equal responsibility and importance.

In order to improve the quality of life for working children, CWC believes that all actions should be child-centered and in the best interest of working children. Interventions should have a positive short term and long term effect on the children themselves. All interventions should improve the quality of life for children, their families and their communities. The immediate and long term impact of all actions on working children has to be monitored and assessed. It should be mandatory that child-centered mechanisms such as the understanding

of adults on how to work with children rather than for children and that children be willing to work on the changes as well, be set up before any intervention is implemented.

Organised representation of working children and their ideals and beliefs have to be recognized and respected. No decisions or actions which have an impact on working children should be taken without consulting them.<sup>58</sup> An example of this occurs each time the organization is approached to have the children participate in conferences, research endeavours and meetings. The answer given by staff members is neutral until they have discussed it with the children. This is especially true if the request is made for members of Bhima Sangha to speak on an issue for UN events or local meetings. The staff will not speak on behalf of these members unless given permission. As more and more organizations adopt a more child centre approach successfully, it will force people to modify agendas and timelines in order to work at the speed of children. Children do not work at the same speed as adults and this needs to be considered when planning a project. Organizations like CWC are an example on how this works.

## **NAMMA BHOOAMI**

CWC oversees a number of different programs. Initially, the organization established an urban program called “Ankur” that worked with children in the city slums of Bangalore. The work progressed into the rural areas of the state of

Karnataka with a programme called Gramashrama. Namma Bhoomi is a rural resource centre (school) which is part of the rural program.

Namma Bhoomi has its own visions, which is separate from CWC's but holds many of the same tenets. The vision of Namma Bhoomi is for a world where all children can access an empowering and democratic system of education that is in keeping with their age, ability and interest and includes all arenas of learning to nurture, promote, enhance and protect the principles and practices of a democracy. Namma Bhoomi is located in Kundapur Taluk on the west coast of the state of Karnataka. During the early part of the 1990's as CWC field officers and staff worked with city children, they noticed a trend emerging in the children they were dealing with on a day to day basis. Large numbers of children were migrating to Bangalore from rural areas on the west coast , like Udupi and Kundapur approximately 14 hours away. (Please refer to map at the beginning of this document) Instead of attempting to work with children once they had reached the city, the officers of CWC started to work within the rural communities. Once there, the CWC field officers established relationships with the communities and the children and their families. Discussions were undertaken to determine why children were migrating to urban areas and methods for reversing this trend were discussed. It emerged that there were few employment opportunities for children in the district and the children did not have the appropriate skills for existing employment opportunities. Both children and parents said that if the children had the skills needed to find work, then they might stay in the area. The Concerned for Working Children began looking at the

possibility of developing a training program for the children to provide a reason to stay in the area.

Initially, the training program was implemented in a variety of rural communities around Kundapur. This meant that the children could live at home and attend classes at the same time. The children, however, were unhappy with this set up. They were learning the same trades as is traditionally set by caste and gender and the children wanted to experience new opportunities not available to them. After discussing the situation with the children, CWC started to look for land that could be used for a residential resource training centre. The training centre would be caste and gender bias free, while offering a wider choice of training to the children. Aside from training children in vocational and formal skills, Namma Bhoomi has been designed to breakdown the boundaries of caste and gender. Within the Centre there is no use of last names or items that could denote caste and everyone is to be treated equally. Within Namma Bhoomi, children are encouraged to learn the trade that interests them rather than denoted by society according to their caste or gender.

Land outside of Kundapur, Karnataka was purchased in 1992 and construction began on the training and residence buildings. The campus has residential accommodation, education and training facilities for 100 youth (girls and boys). It has a library, computer centre, open theatre, dining hall, clinic, science lab, soil testing lab and other facilities. Namma Bhoomi offers a variety of courses on site such as: carpentry, construction, stone carving, tailoring,

computer science, and hospitality, weaving and pottery are offered in another town.

Namma Bhoomi provides formal educational opportunities as well as vocational training. The organization realized that vocational training alone would not give children a sustained advantage over others. Acquiring marketable skills through vocational training alone would not be sustainable if the children could not read, write, converse with others or stay healthy. By taking a programme, which focussed on vocational training, life skills, and formal education, students graduate with a more rounded perspective on society and their place within it. For many of the children in the area, formal education was not a possible or a viable option. There are four components to the educational and training programme: the first involves a curriculum that enables the children to increase their knowledge or acquire the basic scientific and mathematical concepts equivalent to Class Ten of the Indian formal system. There are then the general education and awareness programmes that address the developmental needs of children. These focus on the development of the individual. To accompany the first two components is the third, which deals with the empowerment needs of the children. The final component focuses on the professional and vocational training needs, which are addressed through skill training courses.<sup>59</sup>

The programmes at Namma Bhoomi are composed of formal education Appropriate Education Programme, vocational training and non-formal activities such as life skills training. Each child at Namma Bhoomi starts with a

“Foundation Course.” This course is based on Montessori philosophy complete with democratic principles and innovative pedagogy.<sup>60</sup> Montessori creates a learning environment that promotes active involvement, independence, self-confidence and analytical thinking. Concerned for Working Children staff and Namma Bhoomi staff have taken the Montessori approach and modified it slightly to suit the purposes of the Indian education system. It is known as the Appropriate Education Program (AEP). AEP is a comprehensive educational programme designed and developed by CWC where children learn from material that enables them to learn at their own pace and interest. AEP makes education more appropriate, relevant and accessible to working children. CWC decided to go with the Montessori form of education because; the method has been practiced for quite some time.

The Namma Bhoomi program involves literacy, mathematics and science training for a minimum period of three months. The central focus of the Appropriate Education Programme is that children can learn the information at their own pace. Should students require further study, they may continue for longer. Many begin with the Foundation Course and then continue on with their vocational training. For children who have had some formal training, Namma Bhoomi offers the opportunity to take either their 7<sup>th</sup> year or 10<sup>th</sup> year School Leaving Certificate (SLC) class exams. Many students take these tests every year and graduate with both vocational training and formal education. The vocational training programs provide children with the ability to learn the entire

process of a particular trade from “raw material procurement/processing, design, marketing and accessing credit to managing finance and production.”<sup>61</sup> Once a student graduates from its course, he or she is then placed as an apprentice in their trade for a year before working on their own.

Along with their classes, students take part in general educational and awareness workshops that address needs of children such as issues of caste, gender sensitivity, health, sex education, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, cooking, first aid, yoga and the oral history of the area. These workshops are designed to empower children and to develop the individual. Resource people from the surrounding area teach many of these workshops. Sunita Rao is one such individual. Sunita is an environmentalist and biologist who works part time with Namma Bhoomi to teach the children about the environment. With the help of Sunita’s skills and knowledge, Namma Bhoomi has created a bio-diversity park, which is also open to the community. The children are taught how to plant various species and to store seeds so that they can preserve traditional and new varieties of those plants. The students learn about waste and ways to address this vast problem in India. Although it is still in its infancy, a recycling program is underway at Namma Bhoomi and the guest centre. Following the CWC principle of working in a very holistic method, Sunita continually brings everything she teaches to the children and staff members back to concepts and ideas that are familiar to them. She speaks of the large waste piles along the sides of the railway tracks, but also shows that Namma Bhoomi children can put their own waste in bins rather than

littering on the ground. She shows the linkages between the actions of society and the results visible to the students and how they can connect what they are learning in other classes to their everyday life.

The children, a maximum 100 in the school at all times, come from all over the state of Karnataka to take training at Namma Bhoomi. There are children from rural areas, such as Bellary, Sirsi, Udupi, and from urban areas such as Bangalore and Mangalore. The majority of the students range in age from 14-18 years; however, the school does accept a maximum of ten children under the age of fourteen. If there are more than ten children under the age of 14 they are placed in a youth hostel and attend formal government school. A staff member from Namma Bhoomi looks after those that live at the youth hostel, usually the AEP teacher. During the course of the interviews it became apparent that Namma Bhoomi's general student age group was 14-18, but there were a number of students below and above that age for a variety of reasons.

Many of the people who work for the organization come from all over the state. Some are from Goa and Kerala, but the majority are from Karnataka. Although caste and gender are not a part of the beliefs of the resource centre, it was found that many of the senior staff was male. The roles that the women had at Namma Bhoomi were as teachers of hospitality, AEP, nurse, housemother and one woman is a teacher of science, all typical female gender roles. There also seems to be a split as to why people work at Namma Bhoomi. There were those that want to work with children and contribute to society in some way and those

that enjoy children but had not consciously planned to work with them in this manner. Unlike many individuals who are able to indicate how long they see themselves in a particular position, the staff at CWC and Namma Bhoomi could not articulate the possible duration of their employment. It became apparent that individuals do not leave for positions of greater authority or higher pay. Most of the staff had been employed at Namma Bhoomi for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 15 years.

The two new centres are forecasted to accommodate a large number of students than the Namma Bhoomi in Kundpur, approximately 200-400 students.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

In the beginning of the paper, the question was asked whether or not alternative streams of education, such as vocational training, provided child labourers with better opportunities at success in life. In order to judge whether or not this had been accomplished the rate of success was based on the participants perception of their success and the success of Namma Bhoomi. I was able to interview students about to graduate from a variety of programs: tailoring, electrical, computer training and hospitality as well as graduates from: tailoring, construction, electrical work, carpentry, weaving and pottery. While conducting interviews at Namma Bhoomi, it was not possible to speak with current students from carpentry due to incompatible schedules. There were

students who were finishing their final project but they were out in the field and it was not possible to communicate with them during the research period.

## **REASONS FOR COMING TO NAMMA BHOOXI**

Since its creation Namma Bhoomi has developed a reputation in Kundapur for graduating students who are excellent crafts people in wood and stone, seamstresses and domestic help. This has also been part of the reason why some children come to train there. Parents have heard about the work being done at Namma Bhoomi and want their children to take part, believing their children would obtain training and a well paying job by attending Namma Bhoomi as they are unable to pay for any other training or schooling options. Other graduates heard about Namma Bhoomi from siblings who were members of Bhima Sangha or had interaction with the Bhima Sangha members that were conducting surveys in their panchayat. Some of the students had also dropped out of school and were working but wanted further training and heard about the program from some of the teachers at Namma Bhoomi.

Students who were about to graduate heard about Namma Bhoomi from CWC field officers, church groups, family members and a new program the Makkala Sahaya Vanis (MSV or Children's Help line). Each of the graduates wanted to come to Namma Bhoomi in order acquire further training in a trade that would provide them with better employment opportunities. All of those interviewed agreed that Namma Bhoomi provided them with the opportunity to

acquire skills and information that were not available in their communities. Some of those skills and information were: communication and interaction with other sexes and castes, health, financial matters, yoga, agriculture, environmental conservation and biodiversity as well as formal and vocational education.

While interviewing the teachers, the intention was to establish a picture of the type of person who came and worked at Namma Bhoomi as well as their views on the impact this school had on the students. When the interviewer asked how long people had been working at the school the answers ranged from one year to thirteen years. For some the decision to come and work there was decided by their circumstances in life. For example, one of the teachers had been a child labourer and worked his way through a particular job into a position where he could acquire education and therefore acquired greater opportunities. He wanted to be able to give these types of opportunities to other child labourers. Other teachers came to Namma Bhoomi right out of college or university via calls for employees. For some, they happened to be working on various projects at the school and, when offered the position decided to make their stay more permanent. All staff interviewed admitted to having a desire to work with children and provide them with skills, which they could use later on.

Staff members also took time to be interviewed about their roles at Namma Bhoomi and CWC and their views on the programs; two Masters from tailoring, two construction teachers (both men), an electrical teacher (a male), carpentry teacher (male), computer training teacher (male) and the two female hospitality teachers. There was also the opportunity to interview four men and three women from the administrative and resource section of the organization.

Interestingly enough when asked about the amount of input students have had in the syllabi or final projects, there was little to none. The syllabi were either created by the administration as were the decisions regarding the final projects,

or by the teachers. Only in a few cases did the students have the opportunity to provide input. This happened with the construction and tailoring classes. The first graduating classes were able to provide concrete feedback on how the training helped them when they left. They were able to let Namma Bhoomi know what skills were worthwhile and what skills either needed to be removed or added in order to better prepare the students.

## **DEFINITION OF SUCCESS**

The graduates believed themselves to be a success. They were all financially independent and many of the graduates ran or owned their businesses. Overall the graduates said they had achieved success since leaving Namma Bhoomi. However, many had the idea that, if a person studied in a particular trade the only way to achieve success was to work in that particular trade. To work in another trade other than what was studied was a form of failure. Interestingly enough, for all of the advanced skills the students acquired at Namma Bhoomi such as, gender equality, many did not put them all into practice once back in their own communities. This was seen during the interviews when some graduates felt that women did not have the ability to move beyond low level task at construction sites. All participants continue to have confidence to speak with everyone within their communities and to participate in local affairs.

When each participant was asked to define success, there was an immediate response that success meant independence. Each individual wanted to be able to support themselves and their families without having to rely on someone else. When the answers were broken down by gender an interesting picture emerged. Out of the 17 boys that were interviewed, 13 defined success as having their own business while 2 others were happy to have a job and two were interested in acquiring an education either finishing up what they had started or acquiring greater knowledge of their trade. With the girls, the answers varied. There were 27 girls interviewed and 12 defined success as having a job while 9 said it was having their own business; 2 simply wanted to make money, but did not define whether that was simply through a job or having their own business; 3 felt success came from having an education and therefore they wanted to finish their 10 SLC; 4 felt success came from being independent and having the confidence to speak out about issues and 1 felt that success came from passing on the knowledge acquired at Namma Bhoomi.

Graduates of Namma Bhoomi defined success in a variety of ways: as being an example and model to others in the community, acquiring skills not normally given to women, increasing the size of their business with Namma Bhoomi graduates; increasing confidence in themselves and in the ability to communicate with members of their community or elders that they would not have been able to talk with previously due to fear and caste issues; giving back to the community and helping other children who may not have many

opportunities. After graduating, many of the students found work within the first six months. These might have only been short contracts but in many cases they led to greater opportunities. For one woman, she had a series of goals that she set out for herself and, one by one, she has achieved them all because of her time at Namma Bhoomi.

All of the current students benefited from both the vocational, formal and extracurricular education. Each of the students saw an increase in their confidence levels which enabled them to deal with situations more easily, and to communicate with community members where previously they would have kept silent.

When asked to define success, the students used terms and phrases such as “be an entrepreneur”; “run his own business”; “take the beliefs of Namma Bhoomi and give them to others”; “fulfil education” ; “be independent”; “stitch their own clothing”; “being able to use what they learned at Namma Bhoomi outside” ; “being able to find work that meets their parents approval”; and “positive reinforcement by others and no discrimination.” These are all comments similar to those iterated by the staff and graduates. One of the residual feelings from the children’s days as labourers, for those who had worked or simply not being in school was the inability to be independent and always having to do someone else’s bidding. What was interesting about this point was the level of confidence that each had about the success rate of independent businesses. It was apparent in Indian society that small and medium sized enterprises are found all over the

country. The ability to run one's own enterprise was extremely important to the individual and to their stature in society.

All of the vocational programs ended with a final project that students had to complete successfully in order to graduate. In the beginning, students in the trades of carpentry, electrical work and construction worked on projects such as building the various buildings, classrooms and dormitories within Namma Bhoomi. Once these were completed and the students had established a reputation for themselves, they worked on projects within and around the community of Kundapur. The tailoring students were responsible for the school uniforms. The students were able to choose what project (be it clothing or buildings) they wished to work on; however, the overall project was decided by the Master and Senior administration. The child-centered approach definitely works when it relates to issues where the children are being represented or representing others, however, it seems neglected when it comes to structural issues such as course syllabi and choosing what training to teach.

Although an attempt was made to interview an equal representation of students who had not completed their vocational training at Namma Bhoomi, this was not possible. Due to a variety of obstacles, it was only possible to interview three individuals who dropped out, one boy from construction and one boy and one girl from electrical.

## **EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS**

One of Namma Bhoomi's more discussed success stories is a graduate from the first construction class. This graduate was an ex-child labourer who had worked in construction for 2.5 rupees a day. After graduating in 1994 he earned 20 rupees a day.-This was achieved as he and six other graduates from that year formed a construction company. They went on to build buildings at Namma Bhoomi. They are so successful that they have two years of projects booked throughout the state. The company, which is owned and run by the graduates travelled to Tamil Nadu in 2005 along with Namma Bhoomi and CWC staff to determine how, their low-technology construction could assist in the rebuilding of tsunami stricken areas.

The tailoring graduates also formed a small company, which worked out of Namma Bhoomi for the first year or two and has since moved into Kundapur. Many of the tailors have gone on to teach others their craft and run their own businesses or run one of the three Namma Angadi (a collective marketing network for traditional young traditional crafts persons of Karnataka).

## **PARTICIPANT SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO NAMMA BHOOXI**

One improvement that the graduates felt should be made was to provide the younger students with longer training so that they would have had more time

to mature and settle down. The older students felt it was quite difficult to learn a trade and at the same time have to repeat the lesson to the younger students because they were not paying attention in class. This is one improvement that has been implemented with the introduction of the foundation course and the longer training times.

Some of the older graduates who had been working for a period also indicated that there was a need to update some of the skills being taught to the students and to look at modernizing the trades being taught, not to stick only with the traditional ways. When this was mentioned to the senior administration, they indicated that they had heard this before, and would incorporate new ideas as opportunities became available.

All of the current students were asked if there were any improvements that could be made to Namma Bhoomi. One item that did emerge was that some of them found the dormitory style rooms difficult to adjust to at first. This style of room meant that some of their roommates might not be people they generally would associate with outside of class; however, this teaches them how to get along with people even those that you do not like very much. The comment was also made by some students that any problems that arise later in life for them would have nothing to do with Namma Bhoomi. This would be because they are responsible for the decisions they make in life. As well, any exposure is basically good exposure because they learn from it.

All the teachers had comments to make about changes to courses and the allocation of time for theoretical and practical activities. However, there were no

major comments on how the school was run on the whole. This was not totally surprising as many people are not prone to criticize their place of employment to outsiders especially foreigners.

Although the students are acquiring skills, there are issues within the Centre that are not being discussed or acknowledged. The major one is that, out of the students currently enrolled at Namma Bhoomi that were interviewed, approximately three-quarters were drop outs not ex-child labourers. However, the staff and organizational documentation still referred to those that attended Namma Bhoomi as being ex-child labourers. The question arises as to whether the change seen in the type of student attending Namma Bhoomi is also being seen in the surrounding communities.

There appears to already be such changes in rural Karnataka. CWC has been working in various panchayats (local government) with the community. It has become apparent that the children within the community had concerns that needed to be addressed and that these concerns also affected the adults of the community. The children formed a local style government, the "makkala panchayat" (children's government). The makkala panchayat enabled the children to discuss and research issues and bring them forward to the panchayat for action. Unfortunately, there was no link between the panchayat and makkala panchayat. What was required was an intermediary someone who knew both the children and the adults and in turn was respected and trusted by the children. This person is called a makkala mitra or children's friend. The creation of this

helped CWC to reach their first step in having children's voices heard.

Once the children and the community started working together, the next step was to make a panchayat child labour free. According to CWC, that means that: "no children have to do work that is detrimental to their normal growth and development, no children migrate from the panchayat for employment, and all children in the panchayat get an education that is appropriate to them and compatible with the formal system." Looking at the students who studied when Namma Bhoomi first started and the students currently there, one notices that there is a move away from ex-child labourers to drop outs.

The vision statement of CWC it is said that there will be no discrimination based on caste or gender. During the course of the my stay in Karnataka, there were subtle signs of biases based on caste and gender. Among the staff members interviewed the senior staff were of the Brahmin caste and the majority of the staff in positions of authority at the school were male. The women working at the school were teachers, nurses or clerical staff. While this is not necessarily negative, this is typical employment for women in Indian. This reinforces the typical gender roles upon the children who only see male authority figures and women in lesser positions. This became apparent in some of the interviews where statements were made that women should not work nor learn certain trades as it was not appropriate.

Based upon the documentation from this organization and discussion with staff, it was assumed that this would be one place where such statements would

not be made. Both girls and boys should be made to feel that they can train in any field they desire and that, with determination, they can succeed at it. Referring back to the caste statement, although caste is not discussed, last names are not used etc, for individuals with knowledge of the caste system it is easy to determine who comes from what caste. The school has existed for fifteen years and I thought that the integration of the caste within the school would have been successful with members of all castes assuming various roles both senior and not within the school. The idea should have been that it does not matter what caste one is born into and that the individual can move beyond it.

To find out what impact Namma Bhoomi had on the students' lives the question was asked of the staff, "What type of life would the students have had if they had not gone to Namma Bhoomi?" All staff said that the students would have survived but only with a meager existence. They would have held down petty, low skill and low paying jobs. The children would not have had the opportunity to open their businesses and become contributing members in their communities.

## **DROP OUTS**

Although the request was to interview an equal number of drop outs as graduates or current students, it was not possible. Many of the students who did not complete the program due to personal or family ill health or homesickness, moved back home which, in many cases, was quite a distance. While 3 drop outs were interviewed, an opportunity to speak with more would have provided more insight into Namma Bhoomi and why some children do not succeed there. Interestingly, although the children left Namma Bhoomi, they still feel as if they benefited from it for the short time they were there. They benefited from the general workshop classes, the interaction with children from different areas, gender, castes and the confidence that came from being able to talk to them.

Those that left because of parent's ill health had to return home to run the farm or earn money. They all said that they would go back, although they would prefer to be attending a school closer to home so that they could help out at home and finish their education. With the building of a new school in Sirsi and Bellary this may become a reality for them. None of them harbour deep feelings against Namma Bhoomi and would recommend it to other children so that they too can benefit from the experience. What is interesting is that it became apparent that Namma Bhoomi tried to contact the children to convince them to come back to school, but was not successful.

What also emerged during some of the interviews was that the school for all of its attempts to be free of discrimination still falls into this category every so

often. Some of the children interviewed indicated that they had faced discrimination from the other students for attempting to acquire training in a field not normally open to them. This caused undue stress and tension on them which may have contributed to their ill health.

## **EDUCATION: BEFORE AND DURING NAMMA BHoomi**

In order to assess the level of knowledge a student had, it was necessary to find out how much education they had prior to coming to Namma Bhoomi. By asking what level they had prior to starting at Namma Bhoomi and then asking if they had continued while at school showed how much emphasis was being placed to continue or finish schooling while at Namma Bhoomi.

When asked about the level of education they had completed before coming to Namma Bhoomi, the students answered from none to 7<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> standard (equivalent to Grades 7 and 10 in North America); some did stop going to school at 3 or 4<sup>th</sup> standard. While not every child that comes to Namma Bhoomi will continue with their education, many will try to obtain their 7<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> standard. There are difficulties with achieving levels because in order to write the exam deadlines must be met, signed documents from previous academic institutions must be submitted and it is not always possible to obtain these documents especially when some of the students come from villages hours and hours away. For some of the students trying to complete the administrative end

of getting a formal education was too difficult and they simply concentrated on their vocational training.

The students interviewed had some level of formal education; however there were 4 students who had not had any schooling at all. There were also one or two cases where the students were older than the others and had obtained their pre-university courses (PUCs) and were at Namma Bhoomi for greater vocational training. For these students it was more economical for them to attend Namma Bhoomi than to attend college or a city vocational institute.

When asked for their thoughts on the education of their future children many of them responded by saying that they would give their child (ren) whatever options were possible and were desired. They all felt education was important, but did not indicate whether they would encourage formal or vocational education.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CONCLUSION**

Throughout this paper information has been compiled from CWC and its rural resource program, Namma Bhoomi. Interviews with past and present students and staff were used to determine the program's success. This final chapter will highlight the results of the research and analyse how it supports the original question. Based on the research findings, the project will also be examined in terms of its applicability throughout the state of Karnataka, the country of India and internationally. The project is also seen as the possible starting point of other potential projects in the future.

After much research, CWC was chosen as the organization for this project. Through the research, it became apparent that there were a number of ways of looking at child labour. Some organizations see the only solution for the elimination of child labour is by forcibly removing them from work and homes and putting them into formal education. The other end of the spectrum sees organizations working with children to improve their lives, but it does not always entail them leaving their employment or for that matter incorporating school into their schedules. The aspect of CWC that was most appreciated was its ability to see child labour without extremes. They did not look at it as right or wrong. If children were not in school, they were child labourers. If they were working, they were ruining their life or that all children should be taking part in formal education.

CWC looks at the people involved in the various situations and asks: "Why is this happening? What does the individual want?" Most importantly, the organization believes in letting the children speak for themselves not through adults. The answers to the problems come from the people who have the problem, who have the insight into the real issues and can provide the information to any change. They have not and do not look at the children they work with or their lives in black and white. CWC realizes that education, be it formal or vocational, is extremely important in a child's life and in their progress as a confident, well-skilled individual. CWC also realizes that children are working for specific reasons and, before any major changes are made in their lives, these reasons have to be discovered and discussed, especially with the children's family and possibly community. This organization provided an opportunity to see how children would react to an atmosphere of formal education and vocational training as well as health, cultural and agricultural training all while having the ability to voice their opinions and views.

The focus of this research was whether or not alternative streams of education, such as vocational training, provide child labourers with better opportunities at success in life. CWC is not against total formal education or total elimination of child labour, but realizes that things take time and people have to want things to change and therefore progress comes in stages. When Namma Bhoomi was started, there were also Appropriate Education Programmes occurring in formal schools. These programs helped children and teachers work together in order that the student would progress and graduate.

In the beginning the children who attended Namma Bhoomi were ex-child labourers with some education. During the course of my interviews, many of my participants were school dropouts not labourers. This indicates a shift in the background of the students at Namma Bhoomi. The panchayats in collaboration with CWC were working in steps to ensure that first the children do not migrate out of the area, and then they do not work and finally focusing solely on education. What we saw were child labourers then no child labourers because there was no work but there did not seem to be a strong incentive for school so children were dropping out even at grade 3 due to lack of pressure from family and community. One of the issues that was seen was that staff at Namma Bhoomi and CWC refer to the students as ex-labourers without referring to school dropouts.

After conducting personal and group interviews with students about to graduate, graduates, drop outs and various staff members, I was able to accumulate the information to answer the question. The main point that had to be answered was what was success? I saw success as being defined as setting goals for oneself, and meeting those goals. According to those interviewed, success is the ability to be independent both financially and to own one's own business, repay or look after parents and other family members, to be able to speak in the community and in some cases represent the interests of other children at the community level. Even those that did not graduate from Namma Bhoomi saw themselves as a success because of all that they had learned in class and workshops and the confidence they had acquired which they did not

have previously. All of the students we spoke to had found employment, many of them did have their own business and were involved in their communities and councils and teaching other children their trades.

One aspect, which became quite clear, was that the current students were not child labourers, according to the definition at the beginning of this paper. Does this result in the program becoming null and void? Not according to CWC Vision Statement. They are working towards a “world where all children are respected citizens and abled protagonists, who realize experience and practice all their rights through their participation.” Based on this CWC does not have to work strictly with child labourers. Child labourers may have been the reason for their organization and programmes but they are constantly evolving and as are the children. Many of the children they work with in some areas are not labourers but drop outs. This could be where the focus of the organization’s work needs to be at this time in this area.

Referring to the vision statement of the programme, one sees that in order to be sustainable Namma Bhoomi and, in turn CWC, could review its hiring practices. Many of the staff members were of the higher caste and with the training programmes such as computers or hospitality; there is an opportunity to hire graduates of different castes. The students would be able to further promote the work of the organization as well as be an example or model for future students, further breaking down caste and gender issues within the societies. These points are discussed in previous sections; however, they are by no means the focus of this research and therefore are merely ideas for future projects.

One of the questions that is asked is whether or not a programme like Namma Bhoomi could be replicated in other parts of the state, the country or even internationally. CWC is already in the process of building two new resource centres; one in Sirsi approximately 3 hours north of Kundapur and the other in Bellary approximately 10 hours northeast of Kundapur. These schools will be larger in size and will accommodate a greater number of students (approximately 200-400 at one time). Although buildings have yet to be built, CWC has begun to teach trades, classes and hold seminars. There is already a demand for the experiences CWC has to offer and this demand is steady. This demand was repeated in the interviews with the drop outs. All three said that if they could finish their studies they would do so, however, they would prefer to be closer to home so that they continue with their responsibilities to their families. In light of some of the improvements suggested by graduates, it would be beneficial for staff to review their programs and see if there are ways to update some of their trades to suit the demands from the students, as well as the demands of society. There is still a need for traditional skills, however some updates to those skills are required as well as an increase in diversity to keep abreast of the changes in Indian society both rural and urban.

This school and its programmes may be adaptable to other states. Small examples of these types of activities, are emerging throughout India, however, they are isolated. One finds organizations or government programs working with child labourers, dropouts, their families and communities on education programs, labour programs, or government initiatives but rarely all three at the same time as

Namma Bhoomi and CWC have done. CWC provides an opportunity for children to acquire all the skills at the same time in a safe environment. There would be a need for CWC field officers to establish relationships with area children, their families and panchayat members. This might be difficult due to the ever expanding reputation of the children of Bhima Sangha and Namma Bhoomi has throughout the country. The basis of program is solid and transferable, but each state can be quite different from another. There would be a need to review the programs and the trades offered to fit the communities. There would also need to be a lot more ground work done to educate communities about child labour, rights, and education.

Internationally, many of the components used at Namma Bhoomi are already in existence. What CWC can contribute to other NGOs would be the skills and knowledge regarding children's participation, children's unions, makkala panchayats and establishing lasting relationships with communities that continue after an organization has left an area.

There are opportunities for future research, which emerge from this particular project. One would be to return to Namma Bhoomi in approximately five years to see where the current students have gone and speak to them about their views and thoughts on the program since returning to the workforce. It would also be important to see how the new schools at Sirsi and Bellary were progressing. An evaluation or study at these schools could be undertaken every 5-8 years with a comparison to Kundapur. This would show how the school is

evolving and changing and the children who are entering the program and the panchayats they come from.

The focus of this research was on the vocational training with input from the AEP and life skills seminars. Discussions did occur with the teacher of the Appropriate Education Programme, however it was used as background information on the children and their current education levels. As AEP is a large part of CWC's work greater research into its impact on the Karnataka formal education would be beneficial. The state government has taken interest in the AEP and has held discussions with CWC and teachers to see how it can be implemented in schools throughout the state. It would be interesting to examine how this program has impacted children's education and whether or not there has been an increase in the number of children continuing with school or returning to school instead of dropping out and staying at home or finding work. An added feature to this research would be to see what level of commitment the government makes towards this program.

As indicated earlier in the paper, CWC is an organization that believes in looking at all of the information and understanding how the issues affect the children instead of making demands on their lives. To compare that against another organization that is narrower in its focus and compare the results with the children would also be informative.

The opportunity to spend time at Namma Bhoomi talking with the children and staff provided me with a greater understanding of the student's lives and their communities. The children interviewed come from a variety of situations. In

the beginning a majority of the students were ex-child labourers who worked hotels, home, quarries, construction sites and the streets. As time progressed and the programme grew the type of child attending Namma Bhoomi changed slightly. There were some children who had worked in hotels or homes but for the most part they did not work but that did not mean that they attended school. They did neither and did not receive any formal training to gain opportunities, as they became adults. Namma Bhoomi provided them with this. At Namma Bhoomi children had the opportunity to start or finish their formal education, acquire trade skills, which assisted and will assist them in finding better paying employment. As well as gaining vocational and formal education benefits, the students also saw their confidence levels, greater communication skills and understanding of their community, gender roles and health and sanitation issues increase. These latter skills enabled them to take a much greater role than they ever thought possible in their panchayats and to provide support and assistance to the children of their towns. During discussions with Namma Bhoomi students and staff it was said that without Namma Bhoomi, employment would have been possible for the students, however, it would have been petty jobs without much money or opportunity for advancement and job security. They would never have acquired the confidence that has propelled them further in life.

Organizations such as CWC are working at the grassroots level with education and child labourers, but, as their success grows, their impact will be felt farther and farther a field. Their AEP programme is already touted as exceptional by the Indian state government and as CWC networks with other

state, national and international organizations, and their programmes will spread as will their success. With the changing economy and India's status in the world, there is a need to look at what could happen if the entire Indian population was to become educated. It would be a beneficial thing for the individual but there would be a need for the employment opportunities to change to suit the higher education levels.

Vocational training has provided children with the skills and certificates necessary to acquire better paying jobs; however, the information they obtained through life skills seminars, and the AEP enabled them to open their own businesses, take a stand against injustices in their communities, educate people about children's rights and their ability to do more than petty work which has also helped to change the realities of children's lives.

Throughout this paper information has been presented to highlight the issue of child labour and education within India. Information gathered through primary and secondary sources has highlighted how one organization is working with children to provide the opportunity to acquire the skills to obtain greater opportunities in life. CWC through its program, Namma Bhoomi has achieved success with their students, whether they have graduated or not. The students of Namma Bhoomi over the past fifteen years have succeeded in obtaining high paying employment, achieving independence personally as well as financially through the acquiring of jobs and starting their own businesses, as well as

greater confidence in themselves to communicate with others in their community and to bring up issues that need discussing within the community.

Namma Bhoomi works and is a success for the children that partake in the training offered there. Vocational education works, but must be combined with life skills training and formal education to be sustainable once they graduate. The children must participate in their own education. This is evident in the Appropriate Education Program and in the skills training they acquire through the trades and seminars. Unfortunately, child labour will continue to be a fact of life as long as society permits it to exist. However, programmes such as Namma Bhoomi can and do improve the lives of ex-child labourers.

## NOTES

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**APPENDIX 1:**  
**INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED FROM NAMMA BHoomi AND CWC**

Training Courses	Students about to graduate		Students who have graduated		Students who have not completed their training		Staff Members	
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	MEN	WOMEN
Tailoring		3	1	7			1	1
Construction			7	2	1		2	
Electrical	5		1		1	1	1	
Carpentry			2				1	
Computer Training		6					1	
Hospitality		8						2
Weaving			1	1				
Pottery			1					
Administrative and Resource Persons							4	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>

## **APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire Guidelines**

### **Staff Members**

1. How long have you been here?
2. What was your previous occupation?
3. What is your role at Namma Bhoomi?
4. When creating the syllabus or the process are the students involved at all?
5. What is the final project of the course?
6. Do you use different techniques for teaching different students, gender?
7. Why do you work at Namma Bhoomi?
8. What improvements would you make to the way Namma Bhoomi is run?
9. If there were no Namma Bhoomi in your opinion what would have happened to the students?
10. Who creates/writes up your course syllabus?
11. How much input do children have and in each class of students are they asked to evaluate the course and/or teacher?
12. What happens if a student disagrees with a particular teaching method? What recourse do they have?
13. What would you consider a successful experience for a student? Or How do you define success?
14. Have any of the students NOT completed their course? Why? What happened with them?

### **Current Students**

1. What is your age?
2. How old were you when you came to Namma Bhoomi?
3. What course/ training are you taking at Namma Bhoomi?
4. What is the status of those being interviewed?
5. Do they like Namma Bhoomi?
6. Are there any improvements that could be made to Namma Bhoomi?
7. How do problems get dealt with at Namma Bhoomi?
8. How would they define success?
9. What is / was their level of formal education?
10. Were you a member of Bhima Sangha or Namma Sabha?

### Graduates

1. How did you hear about Namma Bhoomi and why did you attend?
2. What level of formal schooling do you have?
3. How old were you when you came to Namma Bhoomi?
4. When did you graduate from Namma Bhoomi?
5. How long was it until you found work?
6. Is there a progression of tasks?
7. Where they members of Bhima Sangha?
8. Will they stay here in Kundapur?
9. What type of criticism have they faced in their new profession?
10. How would you define success?
11. What changes or improvements would you make to Namma Bhoomi?
12. Was her time at Namma Bhoomi good experience for work?
13. What would happen if there had been no Namma Bhoomi?

### Drop Outs

1. How old were you when you started at Namma Bhoomi?
2. What level of formal education do you have?
3. What were you doing prior to coming to Namma Bhoomi?
4. What training were you taking at Namma Bhoomi?
5. How long were you at Namma Bhoomi?
6. What was Namma Bhoomi response?
7. Would you recommend Namma Bhoomi to others?
8. Did you complete your formal education?
9. What does success mean to you?
10. What changes or improvements would you make to Namma Bhoomi?
11. Were you a member of Bhima Sangha or Namma Sabha?

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