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Private effort to end child labour

Our Bureau

Ample support is needed from the State Government and local business community to make social initiatives succeed.

Chennai , July 18

A NON-GOVERNMENTAL organisation supported by a well-known corporate figure, and an industry association came together in Tamil Nadu last week to help put child labourers in school and provide meaningful vocational training for women.

Last week, a handful of school children in Kanchipuram, about 60 km from here, took a pledge to study hard and be role models for their families. The children were in school with the help of Hand in Hand (HIH), an NGO that brings child labourers into schools. Mr Percy Barnevik, HIH's main donor and Chairman of AstraZeneca Plc, witnessed the pledge and addressed the children.

Mr Barnevik, who supports HIH in his personal capacity, emphasised the importance of a child's education. He added that HIH also worked to empower women by trying to create jobs in villages. In this context, Mr Barnevik drew attention to the support needed from the State Government and local business community to make social initiatives succeed.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has decided to support HIH's efforts. On the occasion, CII helped HIH provide vocational training for a group of women in Kanchipuram. Mr Barnevik and CII's (Tamil Nadu unit) Vice-Chairman and Saint-Gobain Glass India's Managing Director, Mr B. Santhanam, inaugurated a tailoring unit there.

A CII official said that a Tamil Nadu-based member, Intimate Fashions, would support the vocational training programme. Subsequently, the company would absorb some of the women they had helped train. The initiative was part of CII's social programme.

HIH has worked in Kanchipuram for about 15 years. Mr Barnevik said the NGO's activity was being extended. It has begun to adopt tribal villages and provide infrastructure support and jobs there. But the NGO would remain focussed on child labour. Mr Barnevik told the gathering that witnessed the pledge that HIH would put many more child labourers in school in future.