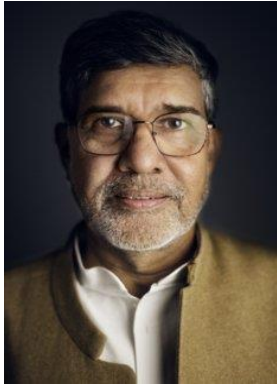


# Kailash Satyarthi

## Biographical



Kailash Satyarthi (born on January 11, 1954) is a human rights activist from India who has been at the forefront of the global movement to end child slavery and exploitation since 1980, when he gave up a lucrative career as an electrical engineer to initiate a crusade against child servitude. As a grass-roots activist, Kailash and the grassroot movement founded by him, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (English: Save Childhood Movement), have liberated more than 83,000 children from exploitation and developed a successful model for their education, rehabilitation and reintegration into the mainstream society. As a worldwide campaigner, he has been the architect of the single largest civil society network for the most exploited children, the Global March Against Child Labour, which is a worldwide coalition of children's rights organisations, teachers' unions and trade unions. His efforts led to the adoption of ILO Convention 182 on worst forms of child labour in 1999. He is also the founding president of the Global Campaign for Education, an exemplar civil society movement working to end the global education crisis and GoodWeave International for raising consumer awareness and positive action in the carpet industry.

Since his childhood, Kailash had always questioned the wrong and unjust. As a young child of five years, he was disturbed deeply when he saw a small boy working with his cobbler father shining shoes at the school gate on the first day of school. He could not understand why some children were different from him. It did not take Kailash much time to understand the stark contrast between his life and that of the cobbler's son. On one hand there was Kailash, who had a "Tilak" (Hindu mark) on his forehead and was dressed in his new school uniform and shoes. His family had performed a religious ceremony to mark the first day of his school life. On the other hand there was the son of the cobbler, with a sullen face and no dreams in his eyes. Kailash was very sad about what he had seen. He went to his classroom and asked his teacher about the small

boy outside the school gate. His teacher discouraged his question. He asked him yet again, only to be scolded and instructed to be attentive in class rather than thinking about what was happening outside. Kailash's inquisitive nature was unsettled and several questions kept echoing in his mind.

In the afternoon, he met the headmaster, who was known to his family, and asked him the same question that he had asked his class teacher earlier in the day. The headmaster explained to him that it was absolutely normal for the children of the poor to work in order to survive. He further said that the cobbler was poor and unable to send his son to school. Kailash was still not convinced by the answer that he got. For the next week or ten days, he kept staring at the boy every time he entered or left his school building. One day he mustered courage and asked the cobbler *"Why don't you send your son to school like me?"* The cobbler was withdrawn and hesitant in responding, but when Kailash insisted he replied in a frail voice *"Babuji (Sir), no one has ever asked me a question like this. My father worked as a cobbler, I am a cobbler and my son is also a cobbler. There is nothing new in it. We are born to work."* His answer left Kailash more confused than before. He kept on thinking about what the cobbler had said. Kailash's parents had told him that everybody is born to do good deeds, attain good education, get a good job and earn respect for oneself in society, but then why were the cobbler and his son on a different journey in life? Why didn't the cobbler's story match what Kailash's father had explained to him about life?

Days passed by but the angst kept brewing up somewhere deep down. It was the rainy season. Kailash's elder brother bought him a raincoat and a colourful umbrella. One day, he saw the cobbler beating his son. The boy was crying inconsolably. Kailash enquired of the cobbler why was he beating his son. He said *"I had gone for lunch and had asked my son to cover the shoes with a plastic sheet should it rain. This fool, instead of protecting the shoes, chose to drape himself with the plastic sheet that I had given to him. All the shoes that people had left here for mending are drenched. The leather will spoil soon. These are expensive shoes. I have nowhere to go now. My customers will ask me to pay back what they had spent on their shoes. I barely make ends meet, with great difficulty. How would I pay back my customers? Look what a mess have I landed into just because of this foolish boy."* Kailash was shocked. On one hand, he was standing there with a raincoat and the umbrella that his brother had purchased to ensure that he did not get wet. On the other hand, there was this cobbler who was just not concerned about his son getting wet in the rain. All that he was worried about were the shoes of his customers. Instantaneously, he handed over his favourite colourful umbrella to the boy, because he anyway had a raincoat as a backup, therefore he did not think twice before parting with his umbrella. This incident moved Kailash to the core.

Kailash always felt very strongly that all children are born equal and therefore have the right to lead a good life. Public schooling was not free when Kailash was around eleven years old. With the help of a few like-minded friends, Kailash started a football club to raise money for the children who were unable to attend school. The membership fee thus collected was donated to support the school fees of few such children. In the years that followed Kailash and his friends went ahead and put up snack stalls at fetes and fairs and were able to raise more money towards school fees of underprivileged children.

Soon Kailash realised that the major problem that was being faced by such children was their inability to afford school books, resulting in many children forced to drop out from school. Kailash along with one of his friends decided to do something about it. In Vidisha (his hometown in Madhya Pradesh), results of all classes in all schools used to be declared on April 30 every year. Kailash and his friends hired a pushcart. While he chose to stand on the cart, his friend helped push it through the narrow lanes of his locality. Yelling at the top of their voice, they started congratulating the students for passing the examinations. This immediately caught the attention of people around them. When they saw enough people come out of their houses, they exclaimed *"You all are so lucky that your children have been promoted to the next class, but think about those children who do not even get an opportunity to attend school just because they cannot afford school books. Old books are of no use to you and sooner than later you will sell them off at throwaway prices. Your old books can light up the prospects of underprivileged children to attend school who were unable to do so all this while. Think how grateful they and their parents would be to you for the rest of their lives."* This actually worked and the response was overwhelming. People brought out heaps of old books and started donating in large numbers. Kailash and his friends were arranging the books on the cart. Soon the cart was flooded with old books. They dumped the books at a friend's house and were back on the street to collect more. People were voluntarily donating the books. That day they were able to collect over 2,000 books. Kailash's parents were not aware of this initiative. When Kailash and his friend started sorting the books, they realised that the books ranged from school syllabi to post-graduation. Now they were confused as to what should be done with the books and how they should identify the needy. They approached the headmaster of their school and sought his help. The headmaster agreed to sort out the books. He also accepted the responsibility of distributing the books to the truly deserving students who were in much need. They then thought that if they gave away all the books, then they would be back at square one at the beginning of the next academic session. Therefore, Kailash asked his headmaster if he could assume responsibility for distributing the books to the needy at the beginning of the session and collecting them back when the session ended. Not only did the headmaster offer to help, but he also spoke to the headmasters and principals of other middle and high schools. They also joined in and arranged for more books. They got

involved in identifying needy children and distributing the text books. This led to the concept of the book bank, a sustainable and replicable initiative to provide school books to children who couldn't afford them. Headmasters and principals of quite a few schools in Vidisha took a keen interest in managing the activities of the book bank for years that followed. Subsequently the book bank was merged with public libraries in the town.

Kailash always found the behaviour meted out to manual scavengers by the people of upper classes inhuman and inexplicable. The manual scavengers were called Harijans (because the term Dalit had not been coined at that point in time) and the people from the upper classes had a discriminatory approach towards the Harijans. People considered Harijans untouchable. This behavioural practice dates back to the early 19th century during British rule, when the concept of municipalities was just being introduced. It was 1969 and India was celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Politicians all across the country were making impressive, spell binding pro-poor speeches that were full of idealism and sympathy. A 15-year-old Kailash was so fascinated by those speeches that he wanted to become a political leader, 1969 being a special year that leaders were talking vociferously against untouchability and discrimination, echoing the Mahatma.

Harijans in Vidisha were not even allowed to enter homes through the front door as they were considered impure. As his tribute to Gandhi Ji, Kailash decided to do something about this to turn the tide in favour of this socially excluded class and organise a community dinner where the food would be cooked and served by the Harijans in a neat, clean and hygienic environment and people from upper castes along with political leaders of the town would be invited as guests. He reached out to the prominent political leaders and other people from different castes and religions and invited them to the event. Most of the people gladly accepted the invitation. A newly built park with Gandhi's statue at the centre was chosen as the venue.

The Harijan community was very sceptical about this and with great difficulty and after a lot of persuasion, Kailash managed to convince some ladies of the community to cook food for the occasion. Kailash along with his friends collected some money and purchased rice and vegetables for preparing the food for the event. The ladies who had committed to cook food were wearing brand new clothes and had brought absolutely clean utensils for cooking. The women cooks and others from the Harijan community were very happy and excited about the community dinner. It was synonymous and symbolic of the upper caste accepting the lower caste. Everybody was waiting with bated breath for the guests to arrive. Minutes transcended into hours and soon it was dark. The people kept waiting but not even a single person or political leader turned up. Kailash and his friends were disheartened and disappointed much

like the people of the Harijan community. The hypocrisy of the political and social leaders was out in the open. Kailash clearly understood that the so-called leaders who used to speak against the practice of untouchability and discrimination in public gatherings were double-faced and did not mean a single bit of what they preached to others. Close to midnight, Kailash and other people started eating the food that was cooked for the occasion.

As Kailash put food in his mouth, he burst in tears. At that time one of the ladies who had cooked the food walked up and encouraged him and said "You are the bravest person that we have seen in our life. You are eating the food that we have prepared." They asserted that the very fact that Kailash took such a big initiative for the benefit of the deprived community was an achievement in itself. However, Kailash was very sad and angry at the behaviour of the political and social leaders and that of the people from the so-called upper caste. Since it was already late in the night, Kailash took his bicycle and literally dragged himself back home with a very heavy heart.

As he approached his house, he could see about 15–20 people from the high caste, mostly Brahmins (the priests' community), sitting in the courtyard along with his family. As Kailash entered the main gate of the house, he could gauge from their facial expressions that they were all furious. His mother and sister-in-law were crying. His elder brother started shouting at Kailash and asked him why did he eat the impure food cooked by Harijans. He could clearly make out that they were coaxed and instigated by the priests who were sitting on the chairs. Those people said that Kailash had committed a grave sin and that the whole family would be excoriated by the community. Hearing this, his mother and other ladies in the family started weeping even louder. Kailash couldn't see all this and talked back to the priests. He said, "It is I who has committed the so-called sin, why should my family members be punished?" In one voice the priests said that now that Kailash had become impure, he would have to be taken to the Holy River Ganga for purification of his soul and body. The priests further commanded that Kailash would have to bring water from the holy river, wash their feet with it and drink that water. Kailash was outraged. At this he shouted, "I haven't committed any sin. You should thank those people from the Harijan community who clean your toilets and scavenge your latrine. You are perpetuating miseries for those people. You all should be punished. Why should I go anywhere for purification. I have respect for everybody in my heart. It is you who need to search your souls and purify yourselves." The priests were shocked and they asked Kailash's family members to disown him and shift him to a separate room in the backyard or face ostracisation from the community. He was instructed not to enter the house and was given separate utensils. It was further decided that his food will be sent to the small room itself.

Kailash kept on tossing around in the bed all alone in that small room for the rest of the night. His anger at the political and social leaders and the priest community was at a boil. He thought to himself, "Who are these people to throw me out of the community? I do not want to be associated with a hypocrite community in the first place." At that very moment Kailash took a bold stand. Since his community and family had decided to make him an outcaste, he decided to part ways with his surname which would have been of no use to him as he had already become an outcaste. A few years later, Kailash dropped his family name and adopted "Satyarthi" (English: Seeker of Truth) as his surname.

Kailash founded Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save Childhood Movement) in 1980 as the first people's movement for social justice, equity, education and peace for all children in India. He braved all odds to uphold the rights of marginalised and victimised children, not only in India but across the world. In the last 35 years his efforts have resulted in the rescue of over 83,000 children and adults from child labour, trafficking and other exploitative situations in India. His interventions have transformed the lives of thousands of children working in carpet weaving, bangle making, the firecracker industry, the circus industry, lock making, brassware products, agricultural labour, sari embroidery, stone quarries and brick kilns, besides domestic child servitude across the world.

Being an engineer, he has always had an analytical bent of mind, through which he could get down to the root cause of child labour. He brought to the fore the Triangular Paradigm of child labour, illiteracy and poverty. Pinning down the trafficking of children as a source that feeds into child slavery and other forms of child exploitation, he along with his organisation – through direct interventions, policy advocacy and access to education as part of a sound rehabilitation framework – have saved hundreds of thousands of children from falling prey to trafficking and slavery in India.

In the early 80s, he used to publish a fortnightly, 'Sangarsh Jaari Rahega' (English: The Struggle Shall Continue), that primarily focused on the work done by motivated people for the larger good of the society, particularly in defending human rights. He has also authored several articles and booklets on issues of social concern and human rights. Kailash set up three rehabilitation and educational centres for freed bonded child labourers that resulted in the transformation of victims of child servitude into leaders and liberators.

While Kailash's life has been full of risks, he has derived strength from all the risks that confronted him. Two of his colleagues have lost their lives while countless others have been assaulted or badly beaten while rescuing children.

Just to mention one of the many incidents, in mid-2004, while trying to rescue trafficked and enslaved Nepalese girls from an India circus, Kailash and his

colleagues were brutally attacked. He was assaulted and beaten up by goons carrying batons, knives and guns. Despite severe wounds and blood loss, Kailash started an indefinite fast demanding the release of all children enslaved by the mafia. Eventually the administration of Uttar Pradesh gave in to his demands and the children were rescued under the direction of the High Court. Investigations revealed that the girls had been physically, economically and sexually exploited by the circus owner and his men.

Kailash does not believe in retaliation, instead he looks for a sustainable solution to the issues that confront him. He strategically took up the issue of trafficking of children to the highest court of the land, the Supreme Court. In April 2011, in this case, trafficking was defined by the Supreme Court of India, leading to India ratifying the Palermo Protocol on trafficking. This also became the genesis of inclusion of trafficking in the Indian Penal Code as Sec 370 and Sec 370A in 2013.

In the early 1980s, Kailash and his colleagues were attacked by the stone quarry mafia at Faridabad (a small town on the outskirts of Delhi). His office was gutted and his home was ransacked. His colleagues Aadarsh Kishore and Dhoomdas were killed. Kailash's family used to live under perpetual death threats, but this could not destabilise him from launching a full-blown campaign against slavery and bonded labour that not only sensitised the workers at stone quarries but also successfully mobilised the masses and policy makers to stand up for the rights of such workers. Persistent efforts by Kailash led to the rescue of 2,000 families by the authorities from slavery and forced labour. This also led to a new definition of forced and bonded labour. This toil gave birth to the first ever union of quarry workers in India to empower them for collective bargain for a minimum wage. This also led to the formalisation of a minimum wage structure for the stone quarry workers that lit a spark for the trade union movement in India. This was a mammoth step towards workers' empowerment and rights.

In the 1980s, the carpet and rug manufacturing sector in South Asia was infamous for using child labour, under the pretext that children's nimble fingers were best for knotting the carpets. The Mirzapur-Bhadoi-Banaras belt in India was the hub where carpets were being produced at the cost of innocent childhoods. Kailash initiated action against child labour by conducting regular rescue operations to release trafficked bonded child labourers in the carpet industry. Following one such operation, Kailash personally returned a trafficked boy to his home village. When he was standing at the railway station to board a train home, he saw dozens of children getting off from trains with middlemen. He objected, raised an alarm but was arrested for causing a disturbance at the station. He realized that the situation required a larger solution. He founded a social voluntary labelling process Rugmark (now known as Goodweave), to monitor and certify that the carpets produced under

the label did not use child labour in any part of the supply chain. Rugmark was the first example of a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative for the protection of children.

Kailash led mass sensitisation in the carpet manufacturing belt of Uttar Pradesh as well as the source areas in Bihar and West Bengal from which children were being supplied as a cheap source of labour. The world over, consumers started to become aware of this and started demanding carpets that were not made by children. This was an awakening for consumers, which Kailash knew would go a long way in improving labour conditions in the supply chains in a sustainable manner. The unprecedented success of Rugmark also rested upon Kailash's firm ideology that his fight was not against any specific industry or individual, but was against the larger crime and evil of child slavery. This voluntary social labelling initiative – combined with direct action on the ground, awareness-building and legal intervention – astoundingly brought down the number of child labourers in the carpet industry of Nepal, Pakistan and India from over 1 million in early 90s to fewer than 300,000.

Kailash subsequently replicated his experience in the carpet sector in the sporting goods industry of India and Pakistan; the garment manufacturing sector in India; the global cosmetics industry; and the chocolate industry, which relied on cocoa beans grown by child labourers in West Africa. His interventions in these fields gave a fillip to the multi-stakeholder partnership model in many other sectors as a collective approach to tackle the problem of child labour and associated exploitation.

Kailash has always been of the firm view that child labour is an issue that affects the developed world much as it does the developing world. Kailash felt that there was a dire need for an international law on policy against the worst forms of child labour. In 1996 he put forth to the world a proposal for such a law. The very same year he innovatively conceptualised the Global March Against Child Labour, organised in 1998 across 103 countries with 7.2 million participants. This was one of the biggest mass mobilisation campaigns in history. The participation of children in the march was unprecedented and they were the real icons of this movement. On June 2, 1998, for the first time in the history of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), civil society under the leadership of Kailash was permitted to enter the Palais des Nations (Geneva headquarters of the United Nations). Children along with Kailash walked in and addressed labour ministers and leaders of employer and labour organisations, demanding a special convention on the worst forms of child labour. This ultimately triggered the discussions on the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), which was finally adopted by the ILO in 1999. This was big victory for all the civil society organisations under the flagship of the Global March Against Child Labour, but Kailash did not stop at this. He along with his partners in over



140 countries launched a worldwide campaign aimed at universal ratification of this Convention. As a result, this legislation was quickly and widely ratified.

Kailash was extremely concerned about the disconnect in the way the twin problems of child labour and out-of-school children were being handled. To tackle these problems in a cohesive manner apart from building the Global March Against Child Labour, he conceived, shaped, launched and led one of the biggest civil society initiatives, called the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), in 1999. Linking the issue of child labour with education and driving international NGOs, teachers' unions and civil society organisations under one banner. GCE under the leadership of Kailash became instrumental in galvanising the support of UN agencies, donor and recipient governments. The period between 2000 and 2014 witnessed a sharp reduction in child labour statistics at the global level from 250 million to 168 million. The number of out-of-school children plummeted to 70 million from 113 million during the same period. Today the number of out-of-school children is 58 million. These two worldwide coalitions, the Global March Against Child Labour and the Global Campaign for Education, became the reference point for the discourse on child labour and the associated education disadvantages.

Kailash has always believed that inclusive growth cannot be achieved until all stakeholders agree on a common minimum agenda. He has been active in persuading and motivating parliamentarians, businessmen, religious groups, social leaders and ordinary people around the world to uphold the rights of the child. To involve all stakeholders in bringing about a meaningful difference in the fight against child labour, involving the general public, increase awareness and sensitisation and placing the subject of child rights on national agendas, Kailash initiated many "yatras" or physical marches. One of the most significant marches was Shiksha Yatra (the Education March) in 2001 to mobilise mass support to bring about a constitutional amendment making free quality education a fundamental right in India. Working with 166 number of parliamentarians post the awareness in India on the Right to Education (RTE), Kailash's efforts paved the way for the 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, making education a fundamental right.

In 2007 the Global March Against Child Labour under Kailash's leadership convened the South Asian March Against Child Trafficking for forced labour, which created unprecedented awareness on the issue of trafficking of children for forced labour in the region. It ultimately led to the amendment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Protocol to include trafficking under its ambit. This marked a turning point in activism against trafficking, which was rampant in South Asia. This placed the global spotlight on trafficking of children for forced labour.

Kailash says that, “Educating children is the key to sound, sustainable economic development in any nation.” His mission of creating a “child-friendly world” has its roots in the creation of hundreds of “child-friendly villages” or Bal Mitra Grams (BMGs) in India and Nepal as safe and peaceful habitats for children who have been withdrawn from work and enrolled in school. These exemplary villages adhere strictly to democratic principles, and children’s views are accorded the utmost respect in the village decision-making process. A children’s parliament is constituted so that all the children can have a say in matters that concern them. The children’s parliament works in close cooperation under the village panchayat (the constitutional body) to ensure that the problems of the children are addressed. The impact of the child-friendly villages has been tremendous and manifold. These villages have seen a total abolition of child marriages and child exploitation, and an increase in women’s empowerment and school retention. Above all, the child-friendly villages bring children under the ambit of self-governance and instil leadership qualities in them during their formative years. BMG changes the very mindset and social orientation of a village, laying the foundations for the success of the children with the utmost respect for their rights.

Kailash started his crusade against child labour in India in early 80s, when “child labour” was a completely unheard term. His fight was not easy. There were no enablers. In such a landscape, from 1980 to 1986 he made several representations to the Government of India and backed them up with numerous raid-and-rescue operations for child slaves. His efforts reaped results, with the passage of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act in 1986. He was not satisfied with the tenets of this law and found them ineffective. Over time, as his policy advocacy efforts and interventions in the field of child labour, education and social inclusion intensified – and especially after the passage of the Right to Education Act in 2009 – the child labour law became all the more archaic.

Kailash strongly advocated for amendments to the child labour law to bring it into conformity with other important legislations and statutes like the Right to Education Act, the Juvenile Justice Act and the Indian Penal Code among others. In May 2012 India’s Minister of Labour and Employment acceded to the demands made by Kailash and his team. The Minister made a formal announcement at a consultation organised by Bachpan Bachao Andolan and the Global March Against Child Labour, of the Government’s intention to amend the Child Labour Bill in India. The Union Cabinet approved the amendments in the child labour law in August 2012. Kailash regularly followed up with the Government and opposition parties to get their consensus for tabling the Amendment Bill in both the houses of Parliament to ensure its passage. The Amendment Bill was introduced in the Upper House of Parliament in first week of December 2012. Kailash then initiated a consensus-building process with all

relevant stakeholders including government agencies, trade unions, and state commissions for protection of children's rights, teachers' associations and children's rights organisations through national and state level consultations. Kailash also testified on the proposed amendments to the child labour law before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour on behalf of the Global March and BBA. He presented a strong case to ban all forms of child labour up to age 14, rehabilitation of victims of child labour and stringent punishment against offenders, based on the consultations held. The committee accepted most of the suggestions and reflected on them in its report, which was tabled in the Parliament of India in December 2013. In 2015, Kailash continues to seek the support of the ruling party to expedite the passage of the Child Labour Amendment Bill in the Parliament of India.

In December 2012 Satyarthi organised the March Against Child Labour and Trafficking, which raised a clarion call against trafficking of children for forced labour emanating from Northeast India – a region which over the years has emerged as the biggest source, transit and destination area of child trafficking. This was the first initiative of its kind in the region. The then Honourable Chief Justice of India himself flagged off the march, declaring zero tolerance by the Apex Judiciary towards child labour and trafficking. The initiative has already started yielding results in terms of concerted inter-agency collaboration for apprehending child traffickers. India took a quantum leap in legislation with respect to trafficking when Bachpan Bachao Andolan and the Global March Against Child Labour, under the leadership of Kailash and his team, convinced the Justice J.S. Verma committee – constituted by the Government of India to amend criminal law in India to ensure speedy justice and enhanced punishment in cases of sexual and gender-based violence – of the relevance of 'trafficking in persons' since it leads to physical exploitation, slavery, slavery-like conditions of servitude and sexual abuse including rape. As a result, Sections 370 and 370 A were incorporated into the Indian Penal Code through the enactment of Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 on April 2, 2013, aligning national legislation with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) under Kailash's leadership has been pursuing judicial support, securing several landmark judgements and orders from the Honourable Supreme Court of India and various other high courts to protect the rights of children. India has a serious problem of missing children, and this issue has been largely ignored.

Kailash and his organisation BBA were the first ones to establish that missing children end up as child slaves and are subjected to unimaginable forms of violations. Owing to Kailash's intervention and proactive engagement with the

judiciary to protect the rights of all children, the Supreme Court of India responded to a petition filed by Bachpan Bachao Andolan by approving a landmark order on missing children on May 10, 2013. This order defined the term 'missing children' ensured all cases of missing children are investigated and also clearly underlined the need and importance of inter-agency collaboration to track down and rescue these children.

Kailash's efforts to persuade the global community to take steps against trafficking were strengthened during the 3rd Global Conference on Child Labour (III GCCL) held in Brazil in October 2013. He followed up with the Minister of Social Development & Hunger Alleviation of Brazil, Ms. Tereza Campello, a Special Advisor to President Dilma Rousseff and former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. He suggested convening a special platform, "Parliamentarians Without Borders for Children's Rights," aimed at the elimination of child labour. The first meeting of this global platform happened in March 2015.

As the international community gears up to adopt and acclaim the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, Kailash along with like-minded organisations spearheaded the "End Child Slavery Week Campaign" in 2014, which calls upon global leaders to ensure that they include the abolition of child slavery in the post-2015 development agenda. The first End Child Slavery Week campaign was inaugurated on the Universal Children's Day on November 20, 2014. Kailash has always maintained that addressing the serious issue of child slavery is a matter of urgency and priority.

Many organisations and individuals joined the End Child Slavery Week campaign. The European Commission and eminent persons such as Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy for Global Education, and Brazil's former President Lula lent support to the cause of abolishing child slavery. Between November 20 and 26, 2014 diverse activities were organised across the globe to raise awareness on child slavery, engage stakeholders – especially policy makers – and to run a petition drive to influence the SDGs. While a youth rally and solidarity walk were organised in the United Kingdom, seminars, speeches and conferences were organised in Chile, Panama, Peru, Uganda and other Latin American and African countries. In Asian countries, candlelight vigils, cycle rallies, sports day for children, writing and drawing competitions – to name a few – sensitised and mobilised many people on the issue of child slavery. In Australia, teachers conducted awareness sessions in classrooms on child labour and child slavery. All these actions and efforts and many more, including running the petition online, garnered the support of 550,000 people and the number is still growing. Kailash presented the petition with 550,000 signatures to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, urging him to include and prioritise abolition of child slavery in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Kailash Satyarthi has received the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) Defender of Democracy Award; the Robert F Kennedy Human Rights Award (USA); the Medal of the Italian Senate; and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Human Rights Award (Germany), among many other accolades. These awards have been conferred on Satyarthi for his immense contribution in advancing human rights. His work and life have been extensively featured in national and international media.

Owing to his desire to help children in need of care and protection, Kailash places the global spotlight on the children's rights issues to magnify the impact for the larger good of children across the globe. Along with Queen Rania of Jordan, FIFA President Sepp Blatter and others, he has headed the 1-Goal campaign. This campaign successfully mobilised millions of people during the football World Cup in 2010 in favour of education rights for all children. This was a defining moment in the history of human rights activism.

In 2014, Kailash Satyarthi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Malala Yousafzai for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. Kailash has dedicated the entire prize sum to the advancement of the rights of children. On January 7, 2015, he handed over his Nobel medal to the President of India, dedicating it to his motherland and its great people. The medal is now permanently displayed at the President's House Museum in New Delhi. According to Kailash in a civilised society, there is no place for violence against children. He says, "If a child is denied education and forced to work instead, violence has been inflicted. If a child and its parents are denied opportunities for a promising tomorrow, violence has been inflicted. If a child reels under poverty, violence has been inflicted. If obstacles are laid in the path of a child, inhibiting her progress and development, violence has been inflicted." Kailash further advocates that a compartmentalised approach to protecting children's rights – where various law enforcement agencies and stakeholders at national, regional and global level work disparately – needs to change.

Kailash aims to address the existing policy gaps, owing to the compartmentalised approach of various stakeholders, work towards strengthening the capacity of grassroots civil society initiatives and forge partnerships and alliances for various aspects of child protection. Kailash says, "I am sure that together all of us will usher in a child-friendly world within our lifetime."