the World



batteries.
—Photo Credit* Shezad Noorani, UNICEF



glass factory where accidents are just waiting to

By Aasha Mehreen Amin and Farhana Haider

STARTING on January 17th 1998 in Manila, 60 children from all over the world have begun a 'march' that will take them around the world, spreading a single message _ that child labour is morally wrong and must be abolished in phases. This march which is sponsored by various donor agencies such as ILO and individuals, is simultaneously taking part with other marches across the other four continents. The Global March will culminate in Geneva in early June when the ILO (International Labour Organisation) meets to draft a new international convention to ban the most intolerable forms of child labour. A wide range of organisations are involved in the March including child protection agencies, development organisations, human rights groups and trade unions.

But who are these children undertaking such a long and significant journey? They are all poor children, working to feed themselves and their families. They are victims of a vicious circle of poverty and exploitation. The 'core' group of sixty children include kids from various occupations. There is 17 year old Keo from Cambodia, a street kid since he was three years old; Roeum (17), a former child prostitute, Ronald (14), a rag picker, Dewi (13), a vendor, Acim (15), a factory worker _ all from Indonesia. There is Ram, around 14, a former bonded child labourer from Nepal and Laxmi, Shaukhat and Mohan, all 13 and all former child labourers in India. There is also Gabriella (17), a former street child from Honduras and many more from other countries.

The Bangladesh group consists of four children : Lily (13), Sultana (13), Saiful (13), and Khokan (15), _ all child labourers. They will be accompanied by two 'guardians, representatives of NGOs with which the children are associated and who they know and trust.

Apart from the 60 core marchers who will always be together and complete the entire route, at every entry point of a city or village that they will come across, the Global Marchers will be joined by local children who will walk with them until they exit the city. In this way thousands of underprivileged children will take part in the March. The children will reach each country by air, travelling long distances to different cities by bus.

Exciting as this Global March promises to be, it is not a 'fun event' where children of the world will come together to celebrate something. Children from the core group will speak at the various programmes and



For the child labourer life means endless hours of dangerous, strenuous work that pays virtually nothing.