Child Labour in India: Programmes and Strategies

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ABSTRACT
Children are the greatest gift to humanity and childhood is an impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. The problem of child labour has become more serious due to various reasons like, poverty, illiteracy, hunger, ignorance and lack of proper programmes and strategies. But the government of India has all along followed programmes addressing the problem of child labour and has always stood for development measures that are required to eliminate child labour. The convergence of these services is a matter of priority now and neglecting children means loss to the society as a whole.

Key Words: Child labour, human development, Causes, Development measures. Convergence of services

INTRODUCTION
Child labour is global phenomenon. For many years, child labour has been one of the biggest obstacles in the way of Social Development. Child labour refers to the children who miss their childhood and are not able to have the basic amenities. There seems to be an absence for the proper definition of child labour. However, work done by any children between 14-17 years of age is a child labour.

In 2004 there were 218 million children engaged in child labour, excluding child domestic labour and it is estimated that 40-50 percent children are victims of forced labour, or 5.7 million are trapped in bonded labour. According to UNICEF India, child labour arises in essence from the exploitation of weak and the underprivileged”.

Child labour is a violation of human rights and is considered to be a “Necessity Evil” in a poor economy like India. This hampers the normal, physical, mental, moral and emotional growth of child labour. Child labour is essentially a development problem. The concept of child labour leads to confusion as it is guided by various individual considerations. It refers to the employment of a child in cartable occupations or national contribution to the income of the family. Child labour is commonly interpreted in two different ways i.e, economic evil and social evil. Economic evil signifies employment of children to earn for them
and their family whereas, second context restrict children from obstructing them to development academically.

Therefore, a state wise figure reveals that Andhra Pradesh topped the list with over 19 lakh child labour followed by other states like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Bihar for over two lakh. Child labour has become a development issue caused by various problems like over population, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc. These causes not only affects the particular child but it also affects the development of a nation. Poverty and over population have been identified as the two main causes for child labour.

Child labour is therefore, a concrete manifestation of violations of a wide range of rights of children and is recognised as a very serious and complex social problem. It is common sight in India to see children engaged in various forms of work, whether paid or unpaid. Child labour is thus a fact of life for children in many developed countries and it is an issue that affects us all. Therefore, laws, policies and regulations against child labour must be in place and rigorously enforced by governments by raising awareness of harmful effects of child labour.

INCIDENCE OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

The problem of child labour is a complex issue and it is difficult to cite a current figure for the no. of children engaged in child labour. The 1981 Census of India divided child labour in nine industrial divisions i.e., Cultivation, Agriculture Labour, Live Stock, Mining and quarrying, Manufacturing, Construction, Trade and commerce, Transport and other services. According to Population Census 2001, children in the age group of 0-14 years constituted about 360 million and accounted for 35.3 percent of the total population whereas, children between 5-14 years of age group constituted about 251 million and accounted for 24.6 percent of the total population.

Rehabilitation of child labour is a challenge for our country. As per the census of India 2001, the no. of child labour in our country has been estimated as, 12,591,667. The problem of child labour is also prevalent in rural as well as urban areas. There are 90.87 percent children working in urban areas and the Government of India has been spending 3.5 percent of the total budget in the field of mass education and poverty alleviation.

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation released on 9 Oct 2012 a report named Children in India 2012- A Statistical Appraisal, showcased the griming status of child labour in India. The report presented a dip of child sex ratio from 945-914 in a period of two decades in between 1991 to 2011. Therefore, India has the largest population of child labourers in the world as per the statistics provided by NGOs. According to the statistics provided by India NGOs, 70 percent of child labourers are engaged in agriculture whereas they also work in construction industry, brick kilns, quarries, mines and other small scale industries. Child labour is thus considered as the denial of human dignity and freedom.
The National Sampling Survey Organization 2004-05 constitutes that two third of the children working in India were engaged in agriculture and about 17 percent were engaged in manufacturing. Child labour therefore creates a vicious problem. It not only negatively affects a child’s health, but it also impacts his/her ability to receive schooling and perform academically. Data from 12 Latin American Countries found that third and fourth graders who attend school and never conduct market or domestic work perform 28 percent better on mathematics tests and 19 percent better on language tests than children who both attend school and work.

The statistics of child labour in India shows a Survey conducted by All India Education which reveals facts on child labour i.e., currently there are 17 percent child labour in India. The study also found that children were sent to work by compulsion not by choice, mostly by parents. Child labour is a vulnerable problem in India. According to Bachpan Bachao Andholan, a profit of around Rs 1, 20,000 crore is made by employers of child labour annually in India, which is rarely reported as income in order to evade taxes.

Despite every possible effort undertaken by Government and Non-Government Organizations child labour still remains one of the arduous issue in developing India even after 64 years of Independence. Although there are policies and strategies to protect child labourers but all this doesn’t mean that eliminating child labour does not require large investments. Additional resources of 40 million dollars would be needed to eradicate this menace. Therefore, government of India has taken various initiatives and programmes to eliminate the continuation of child employ in hazardous occupations.

The states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa are implementing state level actions to eliminate child labour from hazardous industries. Additionally, the Indian Postal Service conducted awareness-raising through disseminating and collecting information on human trafficking to remote villages in the northeast.

**WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA**

Children throughout the world suffer from a multitude of harms of child labour. According to ILO 2010 there are 155 million children engaged in hazardous work. The problem of child labour in India is of colossal proportions caused by various reasons like, Poverty, parental ignorance, lack of proper guidance, urbanization, adult exploitation of children, industrial revolution and ineffective implementation of child labour laws which results in involvement of children in different forms of work, which includes risk and hazardous occupations. According to ILO (2012) the vast majority of child labour is involved in hazardous occupations such as, fishing, agriculture, construction, domestic work and mining. Therefore, the worst form of child labour was found by ILO and 174 countries ratified the “Worst Form of Child Labour Convention 182 in 1999”, which focusses on elimination of child labour under the age group of 0-14 years of age.

The nature of child labour is pitiable. India is not an exception. It is evident that in the year 2001, 1 crore and 26 lakh children in the age group 05-14 years were doing physical work, which was 1 crore and 13 lakh
in 1991. Now it is apparent that 13 lakh children were added within 10 years. Child labour is a term that needs to be unpacked. It covers a wide range and variety of circumstances in which children work under worst conditions. Therefore, slavery or bonded labour, trafficking in people, armed conflicts, prostitution and drug peddling are extremely worst forms of child labour which are not only socially unacceptable but such form of labour is illegal labour. Some other worst forms of child labour are listed below.

Service Sector Child Labour
In urban areas child workers are employed mainly in the service sector, including trading and other personal services. Therefore services account for 11.5% of child labour in India as per the UNICEF 2002. Therefore, the main sectors are vending, shoe shine, begging, domestic services, hotels and restaurants and other informal sectors in tourism whereas, many of the job descriptions overlap and require unskilled labour at exploitative wages and under poor working conditions. Such kind of labour is hazardous to their physical and mental health.

CHILDREN USED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
Thousands of young boys and girls serves the sexual appetites of man from all social and economic backgrounds. There are direct numerous links between the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other forms of exploitative labour and such children are mostly powerless to resist abuse by employers. Therefore, the physical (health, danger of Hiv/Aids, sexually transmitted diseases) and psycho social-change makes it the worst form of child labour.

Domestic Work
Most of the children undertake domestic chores in almost all sectors of society like cleaning tasks and washing clothes to siblings and fetching water or collecting firewood. Child domestic labour is therefore accepted culturally and is widely prevalent in India. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), 1999, the child domestic labour is exploitative which harms the health, safety and morals of child.

Child Prostitution
Sexual abuse of a child is any sexual act between an adult and a child which may include physical intercourse, inappropriate touching, oral sex, and sodomy. Therefore, child prostitution means offering services to a child to perform sexual acts in the form of compensation, financial or otherwise and approximately 1 million children are engaged in prostitution every year. Child prostitution is more frequent in developing countries where more than 200,000 children are exploited. Child prostitution not only negatively affects children’s sexual health but it causes psychological harm to them and puts them at risk for enduring increased violence. The federal police also stated that 1.2 million children are engaged in prostitution.

Child Trafficking
It involves transporting people away from the communities in which they live by the threat or use of violence or deception so that they can be exploited as forced or slaved workers for sex or labour. Children are increasingly sold across national borders for sexual exploitation and begging. They often don’t have contact with their families and they are at the mercy of their employers.

**PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIES**

Child labour programmes and strategies have to be operated and formulated in tandem. India’s National Charter for Children (2003) lays out the country’s commitments to prevent children from hazardous work and to provide access to primary education. Therefore, in January 2009, NCLPS had been established in 250 districts in India’s 28 states and approximately 9,000 NCLP schools were in operation. The Government released RS.137.43 crore as grant for NCLP for the year 2011-2012. The States of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh have been the biggest benefits from these funds.

The Government of India and USDOL jointly collaborated on the USD 40 million INDUS Project which withdraw more than 100,000 children from work in hazardous sectors. Various Non-government-organizations like Bachpan Bachao Andholan, Care India, Talaash Association Child Rights and RIDE India etc has been working for the eradication of child labour. Whereas, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) operably under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resources and Development was introduced in 2004 provides additional funds to states for the purpose of enrolling out-of-school children and improving school quality. This programme aims to achieve the goal of universal elementary education of satisfactory quality by 2010.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice And Empowerment are also implementing several schemes for the Schedules Castes. The National Conference on Child Labour held on Child Labour on 22nd January 2001 at New Delhi to eliminate child labour in hazardous occupations and processes by the year 2005.

The Government of India is determined to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2020 indeed. According to 10th plan period the Planning Commission has allocated Rs 667.50 crore for child labour schemes. Accordingly to the Government over 200,000 children benefitted during 10th Five Year Plan.

The International Programme on The Elimination of Child Labour is a global programme which was launched by the International Labour Organization in December 1991. India was the first country to join it in 1992 when it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ILO.

The Government’s 11th 5-year plan (2007-2012) lay out its strategy to promote inclusive and rapid growth. This plan lays out how the Government of India will implement its vast array of social protection schemes in 2010 and 2011. Therefore, the government allocated more than $17 million and signed MOUS with 16 additional states to implement ICPS (65).
Therefore, the government is trying its best to withdraw children from supply chains by generating awareness of core labour standards through various programmes and strategies. According to some major programmes of CACL, The National Children Convention promote a platform for the willing participation of children in which 1500 children from all the corners of the country took part in November 2007 in Bhubaneswar.

According to the new estimates by ILO the number of child labourers worldwide has dropped by a third million during 2000 and 2012 i.e., from 245 to 168 million. The Planning Commission has allocated Rs.667.50 crore child labour schemes as per the Tenth Plan Period. Whereas, the government has determined to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2020.

**SUGGESTIONS**

The Government should concentrate seriously on formulating and implementing all programmes for the elimination of child labour. People, especially employers and the parents of the children should be made aware of the existing laws regarding child labour. The Government should take strict measures for the enforcement of child labour programmes and strategies. Therefore, the elimination of child labour cannot be achieved in isolation, but would be an integral part of the other socio-economic changes and which can be reduced and eliminated by multiplicity of programmes both by government and public at social as well as individual level.

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