

Silent Suffering: A Study of Child Labor in Maharashtra

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Abstract

Child labor is a grave concern in India, a significant problem in Maharashtra, and it is more severe for young girls. Poverty, lack of access to education, discrimination, and social norms contribute to the problem. The government has implemented various policies and programs to eliminate it, but the issue persists. It is disheartening to know that India, a developing nation, has the highest number of child laborers worldwide.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), around 12.9 million children between the ages of 7 and 17 are forced to work. The problem is not just limited to rural areas, as it also exists in urban areas. Poverty is the leading cause of child labor, which results in a vicious cycle. Children from underprivileged families are often forced to work to support their families, which can lead to exploitation, especially for young girls.

Child labor is still a major worldwide issue, even with the laws, regulations, and programs that have been put in place to address it. It takes a multifaceted strategy that combines law enforcement, education, and treating the underlying causes of the issue to eradicate child labor. Child labor is still a major issue in the state, even with its high literacy rate of 82.9%.

Numerous minors, both male and female, are employed in the construction, agricultural, and textile sectors, where they face dangerous working conditions. Girls, however, are especially susceptible to abuse and exploitation. Poverty is one of the main causes of girls being pushed into labor in Maharashtra. Many families have financial difficulties, and parents frequently view their kids as a source of income. Since they can be paid less and are seen as more submissive and obedient, girls are frequently chosen for labor.

Another reason why girl children in Maharashtra are driven into labour is because they lack access to education. Inadequate facilities, a shortage of teachers, and social norms that place a higher value on boys' education cause many girls to drop out of school, even in the face of the Right to Education Act, which requires free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14.

In Maharashtra, the caste structure also contributes significantly to the continuation of child labour. In comparison to females from upper castes, girls from lower castes are more likely to be coerced into labour and are more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Urban regions are also rife with child labor, with young women frequently working as street vendors, housekeepers, and in the clothing sector. These females often endure physical and psychological abuse in addition to lengthy labor hours and poor pay.

We may endeavor to end child labor by identifying the underlying causes, and we also need to make sure that all children, particularly girls from underprivileged backgrounds, have access to high-quality education. Together, we can make sure that every child in Maharashtra gets the chance to go to school and have a life free from abuse.

Consequently, the study's fundamental objective is to determine the various root causes of Maharashtra's high rate of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation among girls.

Keywords: Child Labour, Poverty, Girl Child, Law.

Introduction

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Children: Society's Vulnerable Blossoms

Children are the most delicate and priceless flowers in society's garden. Society needs to safeguard its youth from the negative impacts of exploitation, just as a gardener shields blooming from intense sun, severe frost, and torrential rains. However, in Maharashtra, India, these delicate blossoms are being prematurely plucked from their nourishing soil in order to appease adults' immediate financial needs. Child labour, which is a kind of exploitation, is a serious problem that needs to be addressed right away. (KASHID, et al., N,A) India implemented the National Policy on Child Labour in August 1987 after realising the severity of the situation. In order to address this intricate issue, this policy takes a thorough, all-encompassing approach. Its comprehensive action plan consists of:

1. Adopting laws to uphold child protection regulations
2. Projects with a focus in regions with a high prevalence of child labour
3. General development programs to support affected families

Child labour is nonetheless very common in spite of these attempts. A startling 10.1 million (3.9%) of India's 259.6 million youngsters aged 5 to 14 who are employed as primary or marginal labourers was revealed by the 2011 Census. A cycle of exploitation and poverty is further sustained by the 42.7 million children who do not attend school. (Kondamudi & Vijay, 2024).

The increased participation of extremely young children is much more concerning. From 14.6% in 2001 to 24.8% in 2011, the percentage of child workers in the 5–9 age group increased. Between 2014 and 2016, the percentage of primary child labourers in this age group increased from 14.2% to 25.6%. (Baliga, 2021).

These numbers depict a depressing image of millions of youngsters working in fields, factories, and houses at ages when they should be playing, learning, and growing. These children are denied their basic rights to education, safety, and childhood itself, much like flowers bereft of sunlight and water. Instead of taking advantage of its younger members, society needs to take back its position as a vigilant caretaker. It is only then that these kids, like well-groomed flowers, may reach their full potential and build a thriving, healthy society for future generations.

Table 1

Year	Percentage of working children (5-14)			Total number of working children (5-14) (in millions)		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
2001	5.9	2.1	5.0	11.4	1.3	12.7
2011	4.3	2.9	3.9	8.1	2.0	10.1

Source – Census 2001 and 2011

Classification of Child Labour

The classification of Child Labour can be given in three segments

Sector Wise	Geography	Health Risk
Industry	Urban	Hazardous
Agriculture	Rural	Non- Hazardous
Domestic		

In India, child labour is mostly seen in the agricultural sector. Since that India is predominantly an agrarian nation, almost 70% of its people get their living from this industry. Child labour is a problem that affects families from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, including those who own property and those who live in poverty. These families come from different geographical areas, religious traditions, castes, and tribal groups.

Table 2 Distribution of working children by type of work in 2011

Area of work	Percentage	Numbers (in millions)
Cultivators	26.0	2.63
Agricultural labourers	32.9	3.33
Household industry workers	5.2	0.52
Other workers	35.8	3.62

**Source – Census 2011*

Note: ‘Other workers’: Workers other than cultivators, agricultural labourers or workers in household industries

From Fields to Factories: India's Child Labor Shift in the Industrial Age

The development of the wheel millennia ago launched humankind on a trajectory of advancement that culminated in the industrial and technological revolutions of today. India has experienced a growth in its product sector, providing employment chances to a large number of people, as it rides this worldwide wave. However, there is a darker storyline associated with this economic boom: the industrial exploitation of child labour.

As manufacturing plants sprang up all throughout India, some businessmen noticed that in addition to machinery, there was another resource they could use: children. These young labourers were thought to be the best for jobs demanding delicacy and compliance because of their dexterous fingers and flexible dispositions. Even worse, they were viewed as "flexible" and cheap labours. These companies entice children into a web of industrial labour by taking advantage of their vulnerabilities and their families' desperate need for any kind of revenue. Here, delicate hands that ought to be working with clay or turning pages of textbooks find themselves in dangerous situation.

1. Brick Kilns: Children endure scorching heat, carry heavy loads, and breathe in toxic fumes.
2. Diamond Industry: Young eyes strain and fingers bleed as they cut and polish precious stones.
3. Fireworks Manufacture: Kids handle explosive materials, risking burns, injuries, or worse.
4. Silk Production: Children dip hands into boiling water to extract delicate threads.
5. Beedi Making: Rolling tobacco in tendu leaves, they inhale harmful particulates.
6. Mining: In dark, unstable tunnels, children dig and haul, facing cave-ins or lung diseases.
7. Bangle Making: Near hot furnaces, they shape molten glass into delicate adornments.
8. Rag Picking: In towering garbage dumps, kids sift through waste, exposed to pathogens.

Even if these sectors are different, they all have one terrible thing in common: they put money before the welfare of children. Children's little hands are a resource when it comes to precision tasks like bangle shaping and diamond cutting. Mines and other activities requiring fearlessness prey on a child's naivete about risk. Remember that this is not a comprehensive list. There are many more industries that employ children; these will be categorised as "hazardous" or "non-hazardous" later. Administrative convenience notwithstanding, this classification hides a basic fact: labour is intrinsically dangerous if it deprives a child of their youth, education, or safety.

India's economic development is a complicated tapestry, just like its renowned textiles. Exploitation is woven into the fabric of innovation and wealth. As the country keeps moving forward, it needs to consider whether treating its most vulnerable citizens is a more important indicator of development than production outputs alone. India has the potential to create a future in which ethical labour practices and economic prosperity coexist together, rather than as opposing patterns, by rerouting children from factory floors to school grounds.

Behind Closed Doors: India's Hidden Child Labor in Domestic Work

Domestic employment is a third major sector that covertly uses child labour extensively throughout India's busy cities and sleepy villages. Here, young lives—mostly girls—engage in an invisible and oftentimes unsung kind of work behind the façades of innumerable homes.

Women and girls make up about 90% of India's domestic labour force; they range in age from a young 12 to an elderly 75. Sadly, an estimated 25% of them are younger than 14, which puts them squarely in the category of child labour. These young workers must navigate the intricate dynamics of other people's houses because many of them have either never attended school or left early. Cooking, cleaning, laundry, and child care are routine yet arduous duties. Her days are spent learning how to take care of other people's homes, which is strange for a girl who should be studying literature or maths. What did she get paid? a pitiful amount, often simply food and shelter in return for her lost youth and education.

This phenomenon is an expression of deeply ingrained social norms. A girl's education is often viewed as less important in these communities, since it is assumed that she will become a homemaker. Paradoxically, this idea frequently results in her creating houses, albeit not her own. Furthermore, because domestic employment is private, it is more difficult to monitor, which makes it possible for exploitation to go unchecked.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has attempted to address this issue globally. Its Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) provides a framework:

- A. the term domestic work means work performed in or for a household or households;
- B. the term domestic worker means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; and
- C. a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker”.

The convention urges nations to ensure these workers, including children, are informed of their rights through verifiable contracts covering:

- a. Employer's and worker's names and addresses

- b. Workplace location
- c. Start date and duration (if specified)
- d. Job description
- e. Pay rate, calculation method, and frequency
- f. Standard work hours

Nevertheless, there hasn't been much success with this global initiative. India, which is home to one of the largest populations of domestic workers worldwide, has not ratified the agreement, in contrast to nations like Brazil and South Africa. As a result, India does not abide by these international requirements legally, depriving its youngest domestic workers of this degree of security.

There's a poignant irony in this circumstance. In many homes, the childhoods of the employer's child, who plays, attends school, and dreams, and the young domestic worker, who serves meals and sweeps floors while postponing her own goals, unfold side by side.

India's progress towards modernity is frequently gauged by its tech clusters and skylines. However, how a country treats people in its most private settings may be a greater indicator of its actual progress. India can change if it acknowledges domestic work as legitimate labour and upholds the right of every child to an education over employment. Only when every home transforms from a place of labour into a haven for childhood can the country truly claim to be contemporary in the sense that it is both fundamentally humanitarian and economically sound.

Urban and Rural Sector

From Villages to Cities: The Dual Faces of India's Child Labor Crisis

The issue of child labour in India is veiled in two different ways: one is rural and rooted in survival and tradition, while the other is urban and influenced by industry and modernity. Although they both take advantage of youthful lives, their settings and traits are very different.

Child labour is as ingrained in India's vast countryside as its crops, where the country's 70% of people live. Young labourers here frequently come from families who were forced by natural disasters like floods, droughts, and cyclones to return to their home villages. These families revert to long-standing customs of having children labour alongside adults after losing their livelihoods in far-off towns or areas.

Younger children are often involved in rural child labour, their diminutive stature belying significant obligations. The majority are dependent on the land; they are a part of India's vast agricultural industry. Their duties change with the seasons: spring planting, summer weeding, and fall harvesting. Some even take care of animals instead of working the fields directly. Despite their idyllic appearance as youthful cowherds and shepherds silhouetted against rural sunsets, their grim reality is one of long hours, weather exposure, and seclusion from peers and education.

Strangely, most of India's child labourers are found in this rural area. Child exploitation is made possible by the large size of rural areas, the labor-intensive nature of agriculture, and the industry's financial difficulties. Child labour is often viewed as a necessary means of survival rather than a choice in many households gripping tight hold on poverty. On the other hand, the urban environment would display darker hues if child labour density—the amount of young workers in a specific area—were mapped. Children are drawn into a separate labour web in cities because of their industrial hubs and wealthy parents.

Industry is the primary driver of urban child labour: factories, workshops, and building sites. Here, profit is the ultimate goal instead of survival. Employers place kids in industries like jewelry-making, explosives, and textiles because they are attracted to their docility and dexterity. The domestic sector of the city

likewise mostly employs young people, most of whom are female. Kids live far from their families in high-rise apartments where they cook, clean and look after other kids.

Cities become magnets because they are teeming with options for employment (or exploitation). In a desperate attempt to provide for their surviving family members, impoverished rural households may decide to send a child to the city. Traffickers also take advantage of this need by seducing kids with imaginary promises of better lives and city lights.

However, there are similarities between India's rural and urban child labor: the strain of poverty, the lack of education, and the degradation of childhood, their unique patterns necessitate customized interventions:

- Rural Focus: Increasing agricultural revenue, offering school transport in outlying areas, and questioning customs that condone child labour.
- Urban Strategy: Tighter industry rules, secure immigration routes, and unionization for the empowerment of domestic workers.

India's growth narrative frequently draws a distinction between the country's rural origins and its urban goals. But when it comes to child labour, this contradiction exposes a common shortcoming: the exploitation of the young, whether in ancient villages or bustling cities. India can provide tailored solutions by understanding the particular problems of each location and making sure that all children, no matter where they live, have the chance to play, study, and just be kids.

HAZARDOUS AND NON-HAZARDOUS

Hazardous industries that pose a serious risk to workers in general and to children in particular include the fabrication of matchboxes, fireworks, rag picking in municipal solid trash, and cinder picking and rubbish collection. There are risks to the children's health and development, and prolonged exposure could paralyse them in the long run. Non-hazardous industries, such the clothing, carpet, and soap industries, provide less of a risk to the health of the child labourers, but they nevertheless raise challenges related to the child's growth and development in addition to the already serious issues raised by the child labour issue. (Kondamudi & Vijay, 2024).

Categories of Child Labour

There are many categories of child labor in India. Some of them are given below:

1. Bonded Child labor
2. Daily wage labour
3. Child Labour for domestic work
4. Domestic Child Labour
5. Self-employed Child Labour
6. Street Child Labour
7. Migrant Child Labour
- 8.

Bonded Child Labour

From Parent's Promise to Child's Plight: India's Battle Against Bonded Child Labor

An important statute known as the Children (Pledging of Labour) Act was passed in 1933, when colonial control was still in place in India. Its central thesis was revolutionary: any written or verbal agreement that pledges a child's labour as collateral is void. The Act provided a broad definition of these agreements "An agreement to pledge a child's labour occurs when a parent or guardian, in exchange for payment or benefit, undertakes to cause or allow the child's services to be used in any employment."

The Act did have a subtle exclusion, though: contracts that did not harm the kid, provided fair pay, and could be terminated with as little as one week's notice were not regarded as commitments. This contrast was intended to set fair, temporary labour apart from predatory bondage.

However, the spirit of this regulation is often broken in many places of India, particularly in rural areas. In this case, child labour that is bonded is not only against the law but also a generational curse. As noted by Neera Burra in 1995, a man cannot achieve freedom under the bonded labour system if he is too weak after years of servitude. As a result, he is forced to send his kid, who is frequently the youngest, to take his position, thus perpetuating the family's cycle of slavery (Burra Neera, 1995).

This grim relay race across generations typically occurs in two contexts:

1. **Feudal Inheritance:** Bondage is practically a birthright in some rural cultures. Babies are born into families that have been tenants of a certain landlord for many years. Similar to serfs in mediaeval times, these kids inherit their relatives' debts and liabilities rather than any land or riches. Even as young children, they may be given specific responsibilities, such as caring for livestock, watching over crops, or cleaning the landlord's house. This inherited duty absorbs their potential, as well as their identity and dreams.
2. **Parental Pledge:** The second category is perhaps more heartbreaking because it involves an active choice, albeit one made under extreme duress. Here, parents who are so impoverished that they believe the only way out of hunger or homelessness is to mortgage their child's labour. They seek a moneylender, landlord, or factory owner in a desperate moment—possibly facing a medical emergency, crop failure, or impending eviction. Simple but devastating: years of their child's labour later in return for cash now.

These arrangements reveal the profound cracks in the social fabric of India. The fact that a parent would promise their child's freedom does not indicate callousness, but rather an unfair system in which some people are forced to trade their most valuable possession—their children's future—in order to exist. Additionally, this practice exposes the shortcomings of India's legal system. Progressive for its time, the 1933 Act attempted to void promises of underage labour. But even now, over a century later, these promises stand. Why? Laws, while necessary, are unable to eliminate deeply ingrained feudal customs or heal wide economic gaps on their own.

To truly eradicate bonded child labor, India must wage a multi-fronted battle:

- Enforce existing laws more stringently
- Provide robust safety nets so no parent feels compelled to pledge a child
- Challenge feudal mindsets through education and social campaigns
- Offer rehabilitation and education to freed child laborers

Child labour pledges were deemed "null and void" on paper by the 1933 Act. India's current goal is to bring that nullification to life, so that no child's potential is diminished because of a promise they never fulfilled.

2. Daily Wage Child Labour

It is also pertinent to mention here that child labour works at time or piece rate in together organized and unorganized areas including the informal segment of the economic structure for financial improvements. This kind of child labor gets engrossed in profitable employment. It is a personal profession of work.

Menon, Nidhiya & Rodgers, Yana (2018) examined how changes in the minimum wage affect child labour in India, using repeated cross-sections of India's NSSO employment data from 1983 to 2008 merged with data on state-level minimum wage rates. They observed that regardless of gender, in urban areas, a higher minimum wage reduces child labour in household work. The same result applies for rural areas girls while household labour does rise for boys. The minimum wage has virtually no impact on child work outside of the home across both rural and urban.

3. Child Labour for Domestic Work

A lot of kids help their parents out around the house by doing chores. These kids engage in expressive monetary activities, and they all contribute significantly to a variety of household chores when they work together with other family members. The majority of child labour is employed in domestic, cottage, and agricultural industry, in addition to other regularly employed professions.

4. Domestic Child Labour

In nearly all families, children are responsible for various household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, taking care of siblings, fetching water, and more. In rural settings, children also engage in additional responsibilities like animal care, crop monitoring, kitchen gardening, unwanted plant and trash removal, and spinning and weaving (particularly for girls) (Domestic Worker's Convention, 2011). These domestic activities hinder the full development of children and deprive them of essential elements like elementary education, cheerfulness, freedom, and entertainment.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO website), these domestic duties can have a significant impact on children's growth and well-being. A study by Menon, Nidhiya, and Rodgers, Yana found that in 2008, approximately 77% of domestic helpers were girls, with the remaining being boys aged 10-14. This trend has been gradually increasing since 1983, as observed in their study.

5. Self-Employed Child Labour

Children under the age of 14 frequently participate in income-generating activities as a result of their parents' extreme poverty or other compulsive situations. In most cases, this form of child employment does not take place under supervision. No one is paid a salary in this sort of child labour, and they earn a livelihood by vending, shoe polishing, picking up waste, and working as Porters. This category of self-employed labourers are usually located in big metropolitan areas, and they return to their families in the evening (Basu K. and Van P.H. 1998).

6. Street Child Labour

Another type of children that work for a living is the street children, who are primarily found in semi-urban and urban municipalities. These youngsters end up on the street or on the road because they have either run away from their homes, been abandoned or abducted, and are generally found around train stations, bus stops, footpaths, and other public places with no security. Others engage them part-time on a salary basis. These young labourers are frequently observed working as assistants on construction projects and in businesses. They also work in dhabas (little roadside dining establishments), restaurants, and motels, among other places. Employers frequently exploit street children, making them virtual captives, withholding money, and abusing them due to their lack of protection from family and the government (Amrita Chatterjee, 1992). Children who engage in begging and other unlawful activities under the

supervision of some middlemen/brokers and anti-social elements are also included in this category of child employment (Panter, 2002).

7. Migrant Child Labour

Even after decades of independence, we continue to operate the economy using child labourers, primarily migrant child labourers, while the majority of adults remain unemployed.

(Tripathy S.N, 1997). Migrant child labour results from labour movement to districts, states, or regions outside of the country where trade and service opportunities are growing. The dimensions of migration vary, but it is clear that the primary stream of migration around the world is to metropolitan areas. Poverty, economic marginalisation, a lack of resources in rural areas, agricultural failure, drought, floods, parent landlessness, disturbed living conditions, debts, and bondage can all be key contributors to the rise of refugee child labour. Understanding the Major Sectors and Types of Child Labour in India, as Well as Eradication Measures.

Children are forced to relocate together for economic reasons, in addition to other factors. Migrant adult family members live in urban slums, railway track platforms, bus stations, fly-overs and other structures, and they build structures and roads. Migrant children work in garbage collection and sales. In semi-urban areas, these migrant workers also labour in brick kilns, stone crushers, and other industries, depriving children under the age of fifteen of education, entertainment, and other opportunities to assist their families with their work. These forms of activities effect children's physical growth and development. From Safety Net to Shackles: When Children Become Their Parents' Lifeline

In the tapestry of global development, a troubling thread runs through: children serving as their families' economic backbone. This pattern, particularly pronounced in developing nations, reveals a stark reality—in the absence of robust social safety nets, many parents don't just appreciate their children's help; they depend on it for survival.

Consider a typical scene in a rural Indian village: As dawn breaks, a young girl sweeps the courtyard while her brother milks the family's goat. Their father, recovering from an injury, watches from the doorway. In the adjacent field, their mother and older siblings harvest wheat. This isn't mere family bonding; it's economic necessity. Each child's task, however small, is a critical cog in the household's fragile financial machine.

This dependence on child labor isn't a choice but a consequence of systemic gaps. Many developing countries lack comprehensive social security measures:

- No unemployment benefits if a parent loses work
- Inadequate healthcare, making injuries financially catastrophic
- Absent or minimal pensions, leaving the elderly without support

In such environments, children transition from being cherished dependents to becoming primary breadwinners. A 10-year-old's earnings from brick-making might fund a family's meals. A teenager's domestic work in the city could pay for her father's medical treatment back in the village.

As an economist Lal (Lal, 39-48) poignantly observes, "Children of the poor are economically valuable to their parents as a source of labour." This value is twofold:

1. Immediate Income: Kids contribute directly to household earnings.
2. Future Security: Parents view working children as their "pension plan," hoping they'll provide in old age.

This perspective tragically inverts the natural order. Rather than parents securing their children's future, children sacrifice their futures to secure their parents' present.

India, the world's largest democracy and a rising economic power, starkly embodies this paradox. Its rapid growth coexists with entrenched child labor. Shockingly, just five of its 28 states—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh—account for nearly 55% of India's working children.

This concentration isn't random. These states share critical challenges:

- High poverty rates, pushing families to deploy every potential earner
- Large agricultural sectors, where child labor is often normalized
- In some cases, weak law enforcement against child exploitation

Yet, viewing these children solely as victims oversimplifies their reality. Many feel a deep sense of duty, even pride, in supporting their families. A young girl in Bihar might see her brick-making job not as oppression but as a way to show love, ensuring her aging parents don't go hungry. A boy in Rajasthan's mines might equate his dangerous work with honor, upholding his family's dignity in hard times.

This emotional weight compounds the issue. Children aren't just economically bound to work; they're morally compelled. To them, attending school or playing with friends isn't just a personal choice; it might feel like a betrayal of familial trust.

India's child labor epicenter—these five states housing over half its young workers—sends a resounding message: Economic growth without social safety nets can inadvertently turn children into safety nets themselves. As the nation sprints toward superpower status, millions of its youngest citizens bear the weight of adult responsibilities.

The solution demands holistic reform:

- Expand and improve social security: unemployment benefits, health insurance, elderly care
- Target high-risk states with intensified programs: mobile schools, family stipends, labor inspections
- Challenge cultural norms: campaigns highlighting education's long-term value over short-term child earnings

India's future isn't just its booming cities or tech hubs. It's also in the hands of a girl balancing schoolbooks with farm tools, or a boy dividing his day between classroom and carpet loom. By ensuring adults have genuine safety nets, India can liberate its children from being ones. Only then can these young lives transition from being their families' lifelines to being the vibrant threads in India's rich, forward-looking tapestry.

States	Percentage	Numbers (In million)
Uttar Pradesh	21.5	2.18
Bihar	10.7	1.09
Rajasthan	8.4	0.85
Maharashtra	7.2	0.73
Madhya Pradesh	6.9	0.70

India's Challenge in Global Context

Child labor is a significant issue globally, with India being one of the countries most affected. Here are some key points about child labor in India and the world scenario:

India

1. **Prevalence:** India has a significant number of child laborers, with 10.1 million children between the ages of 5-14 working in 2011, which is 3.9% of the total child population¹².
2. **Regions:** The main states where child labor is prevalent are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, where over half of the country's total child labor population works.
3. **Sectors:** Child labor is found in various sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, mining, and domestic service. The silk industry is a significant contributor to child labor in these regions³ [3].
4. **Causes:** Poverty, lack of decent work, and cultural expectations contribute to the persistence of child labor in India. Many children are forced into labor due to migration, emergencies, and the lack of educational opportunities[1][3].
5. **Government Efforts:** The Indian government has enacted laws such as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and the Right to Education Act, 2009, to combat child labor. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has also implemented projects to rehabilitate child workers[1][3].

Global Scenario

1. **Numbers:** Globally, there are approximately 168 million child laborers, with Asia and the Pacific having the largest numbers (almost 78 million or 9.3% of child population)[2].
2. **Regions:** Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest incidence of child labor (59 million, over 21%)[2].
3. **Sectors:** Agriculture remains the most prominent sector where child laborers are found (98 million), followed by services (54 million) and industry (12 million)[2].
4. **Causes:** Poverty, lack of decent work, and cultural expectations are common factors contributing to child labor globally[2].
5. **Efforts:** The International Labor Organization (ILO) has been working to eliminate child labor through conventions such as Convention No. 138 and Convention No. 182, which prohibit hazardous work and the worst forms of child labor[2].

Impact on Children

1. **Education:** Child labor prevents children from attending school and obtaining an education, which can lead to long-term consequences such as poverty and limited job opportunities[3].
2. **Physical and Mental Health:** Child labor can have severe physical and mental health consequences, including stress, trauma, and mental illnesses like depression and anxiety[3].
3. **Long-term Consequences:** Child labor can perpetuate poverty across generations, slowing economic growth and social development[2].

Organizations and Initiatives

1. **Humanium:** Humanium is a non-governmental organization dedicated to stopping child labor and promoting children's rights. They have collaborated with organizations like Hand in Hand India to rehabilitate child workers and provide education[3].
2. **ILO:** The ILO has been working to eliminate child labor through conventions and projects. They have also set up the Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India to address child labor issues⁴.

¹ <https://endchildlabour2021.org/5-facts-about-child-labour-in-india/>

² <https://www.ilo.org/media/424531/download>

³ <https://endchildlabour2021.org/5-facts-about-child-labour-in-india/>

International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour

2021 is the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, and efforts are being made globally to raise awareness and combat child labor.

Conclusion

India faces a difficult task in ending child labour, but considerable strides have been made in this direction. India can ensure a more promising future where all children have the chance to grow, learn, and prosper by enforcing current laws more strictly, encouraging high-quality education for all kids, and enabling communities to end the cycle of poverty.

Indian youngsters bear the responsibility for the country's future. As long as child labour persists, India will never reach its full potential in addition to depriving countless children of their childhood. A society where every kid is respected, safe, and given the opportunity to realise their full potential requires coordinated work from the government, non-governmental organisations, and all individuals.

Whether raised in a Mumbai skyscraper or a Punjabi wheat field, every Indian youngster has a spark of brilliance, creativity, and leadership. Not only does child labour take advantage of this spark, but it also poses a threat to put it out. India's combined brilliance fades as soon as this flame in even one child goes out.

However, a different future is possible if India makes the right decisions and directs its renowned inventiveness and resilience towards this goal. One in which each Indian child discovers their inherent light after being freed from the bonds of labour. Where countless millions of these sparks, nourished by knowledge and shielded by justice, combine to form a bright fire. Not only will this fire illuminate India's route, but it will also illuminate the path for all other countries that aspire to respect the sacredness of their children.

India's story is one of past grandeur and present aspiration, hardships faced and victories won. How child labour is handled will be a pivotal chapter in this epic story. India will not only be crafting its own history of development if it upholds every child's right to education, play, and dreams. It will be inscribing, for all time to come, a timeless fact into the chronicles of human civilization: the greatest societies are not those with the highest structures or the fastest trains, but rather those who have the softest hands.

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