

# Child Labor is a Comprehensive Curse in India: a Descriptive and Consultative Study

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## ABSTRACT

Today's children are the citizens of tomorrow and their adequate growth is the topmost priority of the nation. The problem of child labor is a major concern in India. Child labor is a complex problem whose mother is in poverty. It has been observed that poverty forces poor families to send their children to work, which results in a serious problem the world is facing nowadays. Children face many problems that may cause permanent damage to their childhood. They usually work to contribute and provide financial support to their families. For several decades in India, laws have existed to regulate and control child labor. The main concern of the legislation was to regulate working hours for children, to prescribe the lowest age limit for working children, to ensure the life, health of the child workers, and to limit the employment of children in hazardous work.

In this paper, I have made a comprehensive discussion about child labor; I also have given state-wise details of child laborers in India. I intend to give the causes in which child labor increases, its effects and the various challenges arising due to this particular problem have been described in detail. I mentioned various industry's current conditions where children are engaging, especially girl children. The efforts being made by the government to solve this serious social problem through various laws, and rehabilitation policies are also mentioned in detail. In the end, I conclude that the possible and innovative suggestions are found to be capable of overcoming the challenges that have arisen due to child labor.

**KEYWORDS:** Child Labor, Education, Hazardous, Illiteracy, Poverty.

## INTRODUCTION

Children are the greatest gift to humanity. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru considered "*The child to be the greatest asset of the nation*". The child is usually a person who is less than 14 years of age and develops less, is immature cannot understand the consequences of any work, and is not aware of his rights. In this society, child labor is more visible to all. Young children work all over the world because their families are extremely poor. A large number of children work in commercial agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, mining, and domestic service. Some children work in illegal activities such as drug dealing and prostitution.

In India, child labor is an incessant problem that is a challenge to the nation. The government has taken various protective measures to deal with this problem through strict enforcement of assorted legislative provisions along with simultaneous rehabilitative policies. Several committees, sub-committees, and

commissions have been appointed by the government from time to time to find ways and means to prevent child labor.

Children are the most vulnerable part of any society. The problem of children is a global one and exists in all societies and countries of the world whether they are developed, developing, or underdeveloped. A child being immature, weak, and dependent on others may succumb to any kind of pressure. The reality is that the future of any nation depends upon the sound development of its children. Therefore, the issues relating to childcare, child welfare, and child development have always been engaging the attention of the Government of India. The framers of the Constitution of India have also been fully aware of their responsibility towards children. This awareness is reflected in some of the constitutional provisions intended to protect the rights of children.

Child labor refers to the employment of children in work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular schooling, and is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 215 million children between the ages of 5 to 17 currently work in conditions that are considered illegal, hazardous, or highly exploitative.

There is no denying that the children of today are the grown-up citizens of tomorrow, on whose shoulders the country's multifaceted development and growth completely depends. It is in fact, in this context that the growth of children into mature persons with adequate skills and knowledge, gained through support from the state, society, and family, necessitates the all-round development and growth of both the personality of the child and that of the nation.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILD LABOR**

Child labor involves at least one of the following:

- Violates a nation's minimum wage laws.
- Threatens the physical, mental, or emotional well-being of children.
- Involves intolerable abuses, such as child slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, forced labor, or illegal activities.
- Prevents children from going to school.
- Uses children to undermine labor standards.

### **DEFINITIONS OF CHILD AND CHILD LABOR**

'Child labor' is a derogatory term that translates into child exploitation and inhumanity according to sociologists, development workers, and educationists. 'Child labor' is any work done by a child for profit. The term 'child labor' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and which is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and injurious to children;
- obliges them to drop out of school prematurely; or
- forced to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

However, the definition and concept of child labor can vary, widely depending on social, economic, environmental, or physical postulates. Child labor is that segment of the child population of a country that is found to have engaged them in paid or unpaid employment in a given situation. Child labor

included children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages, and under conditions damaging to their health and their physical and mental development.

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. It creates a detailed charter of children's social, economic, cultural, civil, and political rights and mandates their protection from adverse treatment of their rights. Article 32 of the Convention obliges state parties to proscribe children from working in any condition that is likely to be hazardous, interfere with their education, or be harmful to their health, physical, mental, social, moral, and spiritual development.

The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, of 1986 defines a child as a person who has not completed 14 years of age.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, of 2000 changed the definition of a child to a person who has not reached the age of 18 years.

The Protection of Children against Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 identifies a child as any person below the age of 18 years.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has categorized child work into three categories:

*Within the family:* For example- children are engaged in unpaid household work.

*Within the family but outside the home:* For example- agricultural laborers, domestic maids, migrant laborers, etc.

*Outside the family:* For example- commercial shops in restaurants and jobs, prostitution, etc.

## **CHILD LABOR IN INDIA**

The problem of child labor in India is quite alarming. It is said that roughly out of five children under the age of 14 years, one child is engaged in some kind of laborer work. This means 20% of children are laborers out of the total population of children in the country. There is no proper source of regular collection of statistics on child labor. The only authoritative source of data on child labor is the Census every 10 years conducted by the Government of India.

India is responsible for the second-highest child labor in the world. Africa has the highest number of employed and exploited children. According to the 2011 census, the total child population in India in the age group (5-14) is 259.6 million. Of these, 10.2 million (3.9% of the total child population) are working, either as 'main workers' or as 'marginal workers'. Out of which 5.7 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. Uttar Pradesh has the highest amount of child laborers. In addition, more than 42.7 million children are out of school in India. However, the good news is that between 2001 and 2011 the incidence of child labor in India fell by 2.6 million. However, the decline was more visible in rural areas, while the number of child laborers increased in urban areas, indicating a growing demand for child workers in menial jobs.

Child labor in India is a human rights issue for the entire world. It is a serious and widespread problem, with many children under the age of 14 working in carpet-making factories, glass-blowing units, and making firecrackers with bare little hands. Children work for eight hours straight with a short break for meals. Foods are also frugal and children are ill nourished. Most of the migrant children, who cannot go home, sleep at their workplace, which is very bad for their health and development. 75% of the Indian population still resides in rural areas and are very poor. Children in rural families who are ailing from poverty perceive their children as an income-generating resource to supplement the family income.

Carpet weaving industries pay very low wages to child laborers and make them work long hours in unhygienic conditions. Children working in such units are mainly migrant workers from North India, driven here by their families to earn some money and send it to them. Their family's dependence on their income forced them to ensure the onerous work conditions in carpet factories.

While experts blame the system, on poverty, illiteracy, and adult unemployment, the fact is that the entire nation is responsible for every crime against a child.

In India, it has been seen that the workforce and the participation rate of child labor have decreased in the last two decades compared to earlier decades. State-wise details of working children aged 5 to 14 years as per the 2001 and 2011 censuses are as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of State/UT	No. of working children in the age group of 5-14 years	
		Census 2001	Census 2011
1.	Andaman & Nicobar Island	1960	999
2.	Andhra Pradesh	1363339	404851
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	18482	5766
4.	Assam	351416	99512
5.	Bihar	1117500	451590
6.	Chandigarh U.T	3779	3135
7.	Chhattisgarh	364572	63884
8.	Dadra & Nagar H.	4274	1054
9.	Daman & Diu U.T.	729	774
10.	Delhi U.T.	41899	26473
11.	Goa	4138	6920
12.	Gujarat	485530	250318
13.	Haryana	253491	53492
14.	Himachal Pradesh	107774	15001
15.	Jammu & Kashmir	175630	25528
16.	Jharkhand	407200	90996
17.	Karnataka	822615	249432
18.	Kerala	26156	21757
19.	Lakshadweep UT	27	28
20.	Madhya Pradesh	1065259	286310
21.	Maharashtra	764075	496916
22.	Manipur	28836	11805
23.	Meghalaya	53940	18839
24.	Mizoram	26265	2793
25.	Nagaland	45874	11062
26.	Odisha	377594	92087
27.	Pondicherry U.T.	1904	1421
28.	Punjab	177268	90353
29.	Rajasthan	1262570	252338
30.	Sikkim	16457	2704

31.	Tamil Nadu	418801	151437
32.	Tripura	21756	4998
33.	Uttar Pradesh	1927997	896301
34.	Uttarakhand	70183	28098
35.	West Bengal	857087	234275
	Total	12666377	4353247

\*Source – Ministry of Labor & Employment

## CAUSES OF CHILD LABOR

The norms of child labor are many and varied. As India's economy continues to grow, children, the most vulnerable sections of society, are increasingly absorbed to feed the country's hunger for global success. The 'hunger for global success' force defeats all efforts to protect child labor. Various factors can be attributed to the employment of child labor.

### Poverty

The main cause of child labor in India is poverty. Most of the country's population is suffering from poverty. Due to poverty, parents cannot afford their children's education and make them earn their wages from a tender age.

### Social and economic backwardness

Social and economic backwardness is also a major cause of child labor in India. Socially backward parents do not send their children to education. As a result, their children are trapped in child labor. Due to illiteracy, many times parents are not aware of various information and schemes of child education. Lack of education, illiteracy, and consequently the lack of awareness of their rights have encouraged child labor.

### Large family size

A family, that is big with low income, cannot lead a happy life. As a result, family members do not get the opportunity of better education, entertainment, health care, and growing up in a healthy family environment.

### Adult unemployment

Adult unemployment and urbanization also cause child labor. Adults often find it difficult to find jobs because factory owners find it more beneficial to employ children at cheap rates, more work can be extracted from them and there is no union problem with them. Elders rest at home and earn a living by laboring poor helpless children.

### Addiction and disease

In many families, due to alcohol addiction, and disease, there is no earning, and the child's wages are the sole means of the family's sustenance. Population growth is also increasing unemployment, which is adversely affecting child labor prevention. Therefore, parents, instead of sending their children to school, are willing to send them to work to increase family income.

### Family tradition

It is a sad but bitter truth that in our society it is very easy to call child labor a tradition or custom in many families. The cultural and traditional family values play their role in increasing the problem of child labor in India at the voluntary level. Many families believe that a good life is not their destiny, and the age-old tradition of labor is the only source of their earnings and livelihood.

### **Discrimination between boys and girls**

We are conditioned to believe that girls are weak and there is no equal comparison between boys and girls. Even today, we find many examples in our society where girls are deprived of studies. Considering girls as weaker than boys deprives them of school and education. In working-class families, girls are seen to be engaged in labor along with their parents.

### **EFFECTS OF CHILD LABOUR**

**Loss of quality childhood:** Child labor leads to the loss of a quality childhood as children will be deprived of the opportunity to enjoy the wonderful experiences that come at an early age.

**Health complications:** Due to poor working conditions and undernutrition, child labor gives rise to health complications. Working in mines and poor-condition factories can cause life-long health problems for children working in these places.

**Mental trauma:** Issues such as bullying, sexual exploitation, and unfavorable working hours can cause mental trauma to these children.

**Illiteracy:** Working children don't have time to go to school. Lack of education and illiteracy make them persons with limited employment opportunities.

**Indulgence into the crime field:** Uneducated children working in society are often involved in criminal activities and commit crimes at an early age.

**Perpetuates poverty:** Working as a child laborer faces many problems. Ultimately, this leads to child labor in every generation of poor children. Hence, child labor perpetuates poverty.

### **INDUSTRIES ENGAGING CHILD LABOR**

In manufacturing industries, children are mostly employed because they are less expensive or less troublesome than adults.

#### **Matches, Fireworks & Explosives**

It is reported that at least 30% of the children working in the match and fireworks industries of Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu are in debt bondage. There are about 6000 unregistered 'safety match' cottage units in and around Sivakasi. Sivakasi has been described as having one of the highest concentrations of child labor in the world.

#### **Glass & Bangles**

Bonded child laborers work in the glass and bangles industry in Firozabad, India. The number of children at work in Firozabad is estimated at 8,000 to 50,000. Anti-Slavery International estimates that 70 to 80% of these children are bonded by debt incurred by their parents in the form of advances. Many of the bonded child workers are children of landless agricultural laborers.

#### **Beedi Making**

Beedis are hand-rolled local cigars. There are thousands of bonded child laborers, 7 to 8-year-old girls and boys, engaged in the beedi industry in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. Tobacco leaves are distributed to contractors, who supervise the rolling of leaves into beedis.

#### **Carpet Making**

Children between the ages of 5 to 15 are forced to work in India's carpet industry under bonded conditions. They work in cramped positions for long periods in poorly ventilated sheds full of wool fluff and dust particles. Constant contact with fluff can cause skin diseases such as scabies and respiratory problems. Children develop swelling of lower limbs and spine deformities from crouching for long peri-



ods as they work on the looms.

### **Lock Making**

Many children in the lock industry work as part of family units but others are found in workshops away from their families. Many small ‘cottage industry’ exporters are subcontractors to larger factories. A survey of 100 manufacturing units conducted by the Labor Department of Uttar Pradesh indicated that children under the age of 14 make up more than 50% of the workforce engaged in polishing, electroplating, and spray-painting of locks and lock parts, all of which are considered hazardous work.

### **Brassware**

Children between the ages of 8 to 12 work in the brassware industry of Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh. Intermediaries called ‘Dallas’ recruit the children from surrounding villages. Factory owners or contractors for bringing in child workers pay these intermediaries a brokerage.

### **The Gemstone Industry**

The gemstone industry consists of several stages that entail importing, polishing, cutting, and then exporting diamonds and other precious gems. For more than a decade, India’s major export has been cutting diamonds, and it took many long hours of child labor to make it possible.

### **Stone Quarries**

Bonded labor, including child-bonded labor, is rampant in the quarrying of granite and other stones in India. Children are required to work along with their parents to maximize production. The whole family works with their hands and hand tools to dig stones and cut rocks and boulders into pieces. Children between the ages of 4 to 12 carry stone loads for up to 14 hours a day.

### **Brick Kilns**

The brick kiln industry - making and firing of bricks from clay - is a significant employer of bonded child labor. Brick kilns employing bonded labor are located in small-scale manufacturing units. Families live and work on the site. Brick kiln workers are usually landless families of lower classes or ethnic minorities. Families become trapped in debt bondage after having pledged their labor in return for advances taken from the kiln owners or labor contractors who serve as intermediaries.

### **Sweatshops**

Sweatshops engage in child labor for their profit, which amounts to infamous slavery. These shops profit from illegal retail activities and use young and vulnerable children in the manufacturing process. Children as young as 11 to 13 toil in these shops for hours and suffer from exertion and fatigue. They have no fixed working hours and are constantly threatened with the fear of being fired, are depressed, and are deprived of education and entertainment.

### **Domestic Servants**

The use of domestic servants in the homes of middle and upper-class families is perhaps the most widespread form of forced child labor. Poor families traditionally send their children to live in the home of a better-off relative. These children are the most vulnerable, exploited, and difficult to protect because of their young age, their gender (most are girls), and their confinement in the household with very little contact with the outside world.

### **Street Children**

Street children work as beggars; selling flowers and other items, instead of being sent to school. They go hungry for days to gather. They starve so that people feel sorry for them and give them alms.

### **Service Sector and Illegal Economy**

Largely hidden from public view, forced child labor is widespread in the informal service sector and inc-

cludes the sex industry and domestic services. Many times parents knowingly sell their children into such work, and in many cases, children are fraudulently recruited or abducted. In still other cases, children often with their parent's knowledge and acquiescence are enticed to seek employment as prostitutes or domestics.

### **The Sex Industry**

The sexual exploitation of children is considered one of the worst forms of child labor and a form of bonded labor. Children, who are sold, induced, tricked, or enticed into prostitution are too young to fully understand or consent to the acts that they are forced to perform. They face serious health risks, including HIV infection and AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, and drug addiction, as well as chronic physical and psychological abuse. Young adolescents also face the risk of pregnancy. Over one thousand maternal deaths occur each year among adolescents. The daughters of these girls are also pushed into prostitution. Child prostitutes are victims of various physical and emotional trauma, violence, and abuse.

### **GIRL CHILD LABOUR**

The girl child needs a special mention in the context of child labor in India. Although the labor of the young children of both sexes is exploited, the plight of the girl child laborers is worse off. She is a child, a girl, and a laborer, and she faces the worst discrimination on all counts, in almost all areas- rural and urban. Many reports are stating that girl child labor is being allotted tasks that are more tedious or arduous, more damaging to education, less well paid, and requiring a fairly longer working day than boys. Girl child labor is prevalent in areas like household work, mostly in the form of caretakers of babies; agriculture work; home-based piece-rate work; bonded labor, and domestic labor. In all spheres of work, they face rampant and systematic physical and sexual exploitation. Therefore the significant characteristics of the girl child labor are: invisible work not recognized as economic activity; no identifiable employer; long working hours and poor conditions that prevent them from attending school; no skill building; low pay and low status; physical abuse and sexual harassment.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS REGARDING CHILD LABOUR**

The framers of the Constitution of India felt it necessary to include special provisions in the Constitution to protect the rights of working children. Several articles of the Indian Constitution provide protection and provisions for child labor.

**Article 14:** 'Equality before the law and equal protection of laws' is available to every person including children.

**Article 15 (3):** The State is empowered to make special provisions relating to children, which will not be violative of the right to equality.

**Article 21:** No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty, except by following the procedure established by law. The Supreme Court held that life includes being free from exploitation and living a dignified life.

**Article 21A:** The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 to 14 years. Where children are allowed to work, it is the employer's responsibility to provide child labor education in such an establishment.

**Article 23:** Traffic in human beings and beggars and other similar forms of forced labor are prohibited and any contravention of this prohibition shall be an offence punishable by law.



**Article 24:** No child below 14 years of age shall be employed in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment. The Supreme Court held that ‘hazardous employment’ includes construction work, matchboxes, and fireworks; no child under 14 years of age may be recruited. Positive steps should be taken for the welfare of such children as well as for improving the quality of their lives.

**Article 39 (e):** The State, in particular, shall direct its policy to secure the health and strength of children so that children of that age are not abused and that citizens are not forced to enter into work unsuited to their age or strength because of economic necessity.

**Article 39 (f):** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop healthily and conditions of freedom and dignity.

**Article 41:** Requires that the State shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing inter-area, the right to education, and public assistance in causes of unemployment and other causes of undeserved need. Its implementation is also expected to promote the welfare of the children.

**Articles 42 and 43:** They protect fair and human conditions of work and commitment that the State will endeavor to secure for all workers, by appropriate legislation, economic organization, or any other means, a living wage with specific conditions of decent work, quality of life and full employment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. This includes child laborers in the widest sense.

**Article 45:** The Constitution provides free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.

**Article 46:** It provides for promotion, with special care for the educational and economic interests of SCs and STs and other weaker sections of the society.

**Article 51A (e):** It shall be the duty of every citizen of India, who is a parent or guardian to provide education to his child, between the ages of 6 to 14 years.

## LEGISLATION FOR CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA

### Indian Factories Act, 1881

The first protective legislation for child labor in India was seen in 1881 in the form of the Indian Factories Act, which had provisions prohibiting employment of children below 7 years, limiting working hours to 9 hours a day for children, and providing 4 holidays. This was made by the ruling British Government to decrease the production in Indian industries through some legal restrictions.

### The Factories Act, 1948

This Act prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14 years. A teenager between the ages of 15 to 18 can be employed in a factory only after obtaining a fitness certificate from an authorized doctor. The Act also prescribes four and a half hours of work per day for children aged between 14 to 18 years and prohibits their working during night hours.

### The Plantation Labor Act, 1951

This Act has not only limited working hours for the child to 27 a week but also provides for one day leave for each period of seven days of work in addition to certain other welfare provisions.

### The Mines Act, 1952

This Act defines a child as a person who has not completed the age of 15 years and a juvenile means a person who has completed the age of 15 but is less than 18 years of age. This Act also provides that an adolescent who has completed the age of 16 can only be employed in any part of the mine if it is underground, after obtaining a competent medical certificate, and that too for only four and half hours on

any day, save between 9 p.m to 6 a.m. This Act also prescribes the penalty for the violation of the provisions of law.

#### **The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961**

This Act prohibits the employment of children below 15 years of age in motor transport undertakings; however, an adolescent can work subject to the production of a certificate of physical fitness in such an organization.

#### **The Apprentices Act, 1961**

The Act states that a person below the age of 14 shall not be eligible for apprenticeship training but this rule does not apply to apprentices who are undergoing vocational training.

#### **The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986**

This is the most comprehensive Act to deal with the issue of child labor. The objectives of the Act are:

- Banning the employment of children, i.e. those who have not completed their 14 years in certain professions and processes;
- Determining procedures for deciding modifications in the schedule of banned occupations or processes;
- Regulating the working conditions of children in employment where they are not prohibited from working.

#### **The Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act, 1992**

The purpose of the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods Act 1992 and its 2003 amendment is to promote breastfeeding of newborn children and infants.

#### **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000**

The government of India enacted the Juvenile Justice Act in 1986. UN General Assembly in 1989 adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. India ratified the UNCRC in 1992. The convention outlines a child's right to reintegration into society without judicial proceedings where this can be avoidable. The government, therefore, felt the need to rewrite the law to meet the standards of convention. So in 2000, the old act was replaced by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.

#### **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**

This has been made effective from 1-11-2007 in India. The purpose of this Act is to prohibit child marriage and its ancillary and incidental matters. To ensure that child marriage is eradicated from within society, the Government of India enacted the Prevention of Child Marriage Act 2006 by replacing the earlier legislation of the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929. This new Act is armed with enabling provisions to prohibit child marriage, protect and provide relief to victims, and enhance punishment for those who abet, promote, or solemnize such marriage. This Act also calls for the appointment of a Child Marriage Prohibition Officer for implementing this Act.

#### **The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009**

The addition of the Right to Education (RTE) to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 marked the beginning of a significant expansion of educational opportunities around the world. In August 2009, the Parliament of India enacted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE). The same was enforced on April 1, 2010. According to the Act, education is a Fundamental Right of every child aged 6 to 14 years. The act also states that until the completion of elementary education, no child shall be detained, expelled, or pass the board examination.

### **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), 2012**

This was formulated to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. The POCSO Act received the President's assent on 19 June 2012 and was notified in the Gazette of India on 20 June 2012.

### **The National Food Security Act, 2013**

The Right to Food legislation in India is an innovative new social security scheme being introduced by the UPA Government. A food security act has the power to change the face of poverty and hunger in India. The National Food Security Bill follows on from the National Food Security Ordinance, 2013 that was promulgated by the Government of India on 5 July. After being introduced in both Houses of Parliament, the National Food Security Act, 2013 was passed on 10 September 2013 to provide for food and nutritional security in the human life cycle approach, to enable people to live with dignity by ensuring access to adequate quality food at affordable prices. It was signed into the act on September 12, 2013. The National Food Security Act, 2013 also called The Right to Food Act aims to provide subsidized food grains to two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. The Act also has a special focus on nutritional support for women and children.

## **REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES**

### **National Child Labor Policy**

The National Child Labor Policy promulgated in 1987 elaborates on the Constitutional and legislative provisions protecting children against employment. The main elements of the policy are:

- Strict enforcement of the provisions of the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and other concerned legislations.
- Progressively reduce the incidence of child labor.
- Providing better and readily accessible education.
- Strengthening the anti-poverty programs like integrated rural development services.
- Adopting a project approach for identification, withdrawal, and rehabilitation of child laborers.

### **National Child Labor Project Scheme**

For the rehabilitation of child labor, the Government initiated the National Child Labor Project (NCLP) Scheme in 1988 to rehabilitate working children in 12 child labor endemic districts of the country. Its coverage has increased progressively to cover 324 districts in the country presently. Under the NCLP Scheme, children are withdrawn from work and put into special schools, where they are provided with bridging education, vocational training, mid-day meals, stipends, health facilities, etc., and finally mainstreamed into the formal education system.

#### **A. Schemes of the Department of Education-**

- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA),
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme.

#### **B. Schemes of Ministry of Women & Child Development-**

- ICPS scheme for providing food and shelter to the children withdrawn from work through their schemes of shelter homes, etc;
- Balika Samridhi Yojana and admission of children withdrawn from residential schools under SC/ST/OBC Schemes.

#### **C. Schemes of Ministry of Rural Development-**

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA);

- Swarnjayanti Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY);
- Indira Awas Yojana (IAY).

#### **D. Scheme of Ministry of Labor & Employment-**

- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY);
- Skilled Development Initiative Scheme (SDIS).

#### **E. Other Social Security Schemes-**

- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme;
- National Family Benefit Scheme;
- Janani Suraksha Yojna;
- Handloom Weavers Comprehensive Welfare Scheme;
- Handicraft Artisans Comprehensive Welfare Scheme;
- Pension to Master Craft Persons;
- National Scheme for Welfare of Fishermen and Training and Extension of Janashree Bima Yojana.

The National Plan of Action for Children, 2005 is one of the most important milestones in India's holistic development of children, which commits itself to ensuring all rights of all children up to the age of 18 years. The National Plan has identified the following key areas keeping in mind the priorities that require maximum and sustained attention in terms of outreach, intervention, and resource allocation.

These are:

- Ensure all legal and social protection for all children from all kinds of abuse, exploitation, and neglect.
- Complete abolition of child labor to progressively eliminate all forms of economic exploitation of children.
- Monitoring, review, and reform of policies, programs, and laws to ensure the protection of children's interests and rights.
- Ensuring child participation and choice in matters and decisions affecting their lives.

According to the National Plan, the strategies to tackle the problem of child labor are:

- Countrywide survey to ascertain the existence, prevalence, and nature of child labor below 10 years of age in both the organized and unorganized sectors.
- Effectively enforce child labor regulatory legislation and rehabilitation of working children through enrolment in schools.
- Link the child labor elimination efforts with education measures in an attempt to ensure that all children in the age group of 5-8 years are directly linked to school.
- Ensure convergence of national poverty eradication and developmental programs aiming at the prevention and progressive elimination of all forms of child labor.

### **ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOR IN INDIA - COORDINATION WITH ILO**

The International Labor Organization (ILO) launched the International Programme for Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) in the year 1991 to end child labor globally. India was the first country to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the year 1992, and set up a National Steering Committee (of which the labor secretary is the Chairmen) to implement the child labor projects connected with -

1. Designing and evaluation programs for the elimination of child labor;
2. Detection of interference at community and national levels; and
3. Creating awareness and ensuring social mobility to eliminate child labor.

During the 11th Plan Period, three Projects- *INDUS Project*, *Andhra Pradesh (Phase-II)*, and *Karnataka Project* were implemented in the country under ILO-IPEC. Jointly funded by the Ministry of Labor, Government of India, and Department of Labor, United States of America (USDOL). The INDUS Child Labor Project was implemented in 10 hazardous sectors of 21 districts across five states-- Delhi (NCT Delhi), Maharashtra (Districts of Amravati, Aurangabad, Gondia, Jalna, and Mumbai Suburban), Madhya Pradesh (Districts of Damoh, Jabalpur, Katni, Sagar, and Satna), Tamil Nadu (Districts of Kanchipuram, Nammakkal, Thiruvannamalai, Tiruvallur, and Virudhunagar) and Uttar Pradesh (Districts of Allahabad Aligarh, Firozabad, Kanpur, and Moradabad). The project adopted a participatory approach to identify beneficiaries and enlisting child workers in schools, transitional education centers, and vocational training centers was seen as a key strategy for rehabilitating child and adolescent workers withdrawn from work. The project also developed income generation strategies to eliminate child labor by connecting child labor families with ongoing government projects that provide access to microcredit and subsidies. However, despite such measures and institutional support, the condition of child labor in India is still in a dismal state of affairs.

## SUGGESTIONS

Child labor in general is a major social disease and national waste, as the economic need for wage earning to support the family deprives the child of opportunities for education, sports, and recreation, which inhibits his physical development. It interferes with the development of the child's personality and thwarts his preparation for responsibility. No one cares about the dangers caused by child labor. We can take many steps to remove this social problem from our society, some of which are given below:

- To stop child labor the incidence of poverty first needs to be reduced, so that poor people do not need to send their children to earn their bread and butter.
- To prevent child labor, we need proper enforcement of laws that impose strict punishment on vendors, shopkeepers, and mill owners for employing children for cheap wages.
- Parents should not differentiate between boys and girls. Through this practice, the number of girl children can be reduced largely.
- The spread of literacy and education is a powerful weapon against the practice of child labor, as illiterate persons do not understand the implications of child labor.
- Identifying the root causes that compel families and communities to allow children to engage in labor. To address these underlying issues by interacting with parents, and community leaders.
- Free education is the key to ending child labor. It has already proved successful in many places across the world and with more effort; the cases of child labor will come down significantly.
- Mid-day meal schemes can also be used as a motivating factor for children whose parents can barely afford a meal to learn.
- Creating awareness about the illegality of child labor can also help to eradicate the practice.
- Poor living standards and financial constraints sometimes make them reluctant participants in this vice. Empowering poor people through knowledge and income-generation projects will go a long way in reducing the incidence of child labor.
- Modify parent's attitudes concerning child education, recreation for children, rights of children, and vocational skill training.
- Strengthen compulsory education.



- Strengthen employment generation, minimum wage, and other programs to employ men and women in the family.
- Cooperation of government and voluntary organizations is needed to eradicate child labor.
- Active efforts will be made to rescue children from bonds and all hazardous places.
- Special care should be taken for the plight of street children and children living in slums.
- There must be pressure, both socially and legally, on the parents to send their children to schools.
- The human rights enforcement mechanism must be geared up to ensure that children below the age of 14 years are not deprived of their Fundamental Right to education.

## CONCLUSION

It is a challenge and a long-term goal to eliminate all types of child labor in many countries. Especially in developing countries, it is considered a serious problem nowadays. As a possible solution to this chronic problem, the Central Government and the respective State governments still need to formulate more effective action plans under the guidance and supervision of the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Organization. The Government of India has put in various proactive policies towards the eradication of child labor. Several child labor schemes have been implemented in India to help and educate children about hazardous occupations. The government has placed a lot of importance on the treatment of these children and improving the economic conditions of their families.

The biggest responsibility lies with us because we all live in society. It starts from our house. Never allow a minor to work. Give some financial help to street boys. Unite those who want to help them. Form a welfare group. Educate the children and give them shelter and food. If we all work from our respective places as far as possible, then its result is possible. No child should ever be allowed to do hard and heavy work in any industry. Boycott those who are doing this and raise your voice against them. Make them aware of laws on crimes like child labor. Make people aware. Come forward take your responsibility and make your own decisions.

Governments can play a much larger role. They should make strict and proper laws against child labor and implement them strictly against those who are putting children on heavy work. Governments should also ensure shelter, food, education, and all necessities for the children. Remember, children are also tools for the perpetrator to commit their crime. The governments of a country should be aware and take the necessary steps for it.

Various international organizations can take steps to make people aware to stop child labor. They can help the children financially by giving free education to all the programs and pressuring the government to enact laws to provide the necessary elements for the welfare of the children. The combination of the above bodies will make it easier to eradicate the ill health of children and will help to keep them away from child labor. Children are symbols of innocence and purity. Your heart should melt in tears when you see them sleeping on the street with a hungry stomach if you are a real human being. Raise your voice in today's youth. Make this world a better place for upcoming generations.

This if done, will certainly pave a long way for both the progress of the nation and saving and nourishing the future of millions of children working in the both formal and informal labor force of India.

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