

The Magnitude of Child Labour: Causes and Consequences

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INTRODUCTION

A child is said to be the most beautiful creation of god. But not all children lead a happy life except those lucky ones who receive proper care and affection from their parents. From time immemorial child labour has existed all over the world with varying degree and magnitude. Child labour is not uniform all over the world. Its status is not the same everywhere in the employment of children. The child cannot develop into a full-blown human being unless constructive and congenial environment is assured for his / her development. He / she is to be provided planned care and adequate socialization opportunities in order to enable him / her to attain human status.

Child Labour

Economic exploitation of children in India is extensive and appears to have increased over the years. Children who are out of school invariably perform work of some sort, either at home or outside, and at wages that are often exploitative, and under conditions that are clearly harmful. Most of the working children also belong to the families that are extremely poor. Parents of such children, themselves deprived of basic education, find it extremely difficult to support their families, children who work. Therefore, they are the ones who need education most of all to break out of the poverty and debt trap.

In addition to legislative measures that will make primary education compulsory and hiring of children illegal under all circumstances, undertaking public advocacy and building social awareness should be regarded as critical elements of public action to ensure the elimination of child labour.

Children in difficult circumstances

India has several million children living under specially difficult circumstances. These include, for instance, an estimated 5, 00,000 street children in seven cities: Bangalore, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kanpur and Chennai. The majority of these children are over 8 years of age, have never attended school and have parents who have low paid unskilled jobs. Destitute and orphaned children are another group about which very little is known. Similarly, there is very little information available about children of prostitutes, children in institutions, children of construction workers, children of fisher folk, disabled children, and children affected by riots and disasters. All of whom fall under the category of "children in especially difficult circumstances". There

is also reportedly sale of such children and girl trafficking across regional and even national borders.

Policy makers have far long ignored the special needs of such children. The convention makes a strong case for special consideration to protect the rights of these children.

The problematic aspects of child labour became more pronounced with the advent of industrial era. Being in the labour children are denied educational opportunities, thereby leading to clear violation of human rights of child labourers. During the early days of industrial development in India and other countries in the west, children were employed with intention of earning large profits as child labour was cheaper than adult labour.

The employment of working children particularly in the unorganized industries attracted attention of many Commissions and Committees i.e., The Factory Commission (1975), The Royal Commission on Labour (1931), National Commission on Child Labour (1979), Sanat Mehta Committee on Child Labour (1986). Reports of some of these Commissions / Committees were highlighted the problem of child labour. Normatively, child labour has serious consequences and implication for children, parents and families and as such it has been recognized as a social evil.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dipak Basu, (2000) in his article condemned the developing countries for stopping the inclusion of labour rights and environmental issues in the treaty of World Trade Organization which are meant to benefit their poor people and working children.

The prime importance of primary education to the children was studied by Majumdar (2006). He stated that although the government had come up with various programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), mid-day meal etc., but their implementation and success at the grass-root level was yet to be seen.

Dabir and Nigudkar (2007) observed that the incidence of abuse was higher among the vulnerable groups as compared to the general group of children in school. The victims of child abuse need special care and ardent attention. It exploits the child's physical and psychological health. Globalization, especially in the context of trafficking child labour has increased the number of children being exploited for commercial

gains. He suggested to the abused and neglected children to take necessary actions or integrated services of counselling, medical treatment, legal help and rehabilitation need to be developed.

Mines, Minerals and People (2005) (a national alliance of mining struggle groups in India) conducted a survey to know the way exploitation of child labour in the iron ore and granite mines of Hospet and Bellary region of Karnataka. The study found that there was a serious violation of children's life and safety and requires urgent intervention.

The Problem of Child Labour

Child labourers are exploited, exposed to hazardous work conditions and paid a pittance for their long hours of work. Forced to forego education shouldering responsibilities for beyond their years becoming world-wide when their peers have yet to leave the cocoons of parental protection. These child never know what childhood is.

The Indian Constitution enshrines in Article 24 which declares that, "No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or in any hazardous employment" and Article 39(1) states that, "Childhood and youth are to be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment."

According to Article 45 of the Indian Constitution "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution free and compulsory education for all children until."

Plight of the Children

As with women, large number of children in our country are also exploited, abused and deprived of their basic rights though the Constitution has provided safeguards for children through Articles 24 and 25.

Every child of the country has a right to have a family of his/her own, and is also entitled to love and affection and to grow up in care and protection of its parents, get free education, have proper housing, food and medical care, have name and nationality and become useful member of the society. The Indian Constitution proclaims that the state shall endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years (Art.45). No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or in any hazardous employment (Art.24); childhood and youth to

be protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment Art. 39(f), etc. A number of legislative measures have also been taken by the Government to safeguard the interest of children such as the Child Labour Act (1938), prohibits employment of children below 14 years of age, the Factory Act (1948) has provisions to safeguard the interest of child labourers. But in spite of all these preventive measures children continue to be employed abused, harassed. There has been sharp increase in crime against children during recent years. Based on a study of street children in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, the Human Rights watch opined that the Indian street children are routinely detained, illegally beaten and tortured and sometimes killed. Child labour continues to be rampant in especially carpet, bangle, and fire work industries. According to an estimate, between 20 million and 100 million children are engaged in variety of vocations including the hazardous vocations. More than 15 million children of the country are child labour. One estimate puts number of working children in our country more than 45 million. Thousands of children are engaged in Mirzapur carpet industry, zari industry of Lucknow, lock industry of Aligarh, brass industry of Moradabad and bangle industry of Ferozabad. These children are exposed to hazardous work.

Child labour in India is to be found in almost every sector of the informal economy. Children are to be found working in workshops and small factories, in dhabas and restaurants, on the streets as well as domestic servants. But perhaps the largest sector in which children are to be found working is agriculture. The state-wise distribution of working children of the age group of 6-14 years during 1981-2001 is presented in the Table 1.

In absolute numbers, the problem is looming large. As per the census 2011, there are 1.26 crores economically active children in the age-group of 5-14 years. The number was 1.13 crores in the 1981 census. The State with the highest child labour population in the country is Uttar Pradesh, followed by Andhra Pradesh. Other states where child labour population is more than 1 million are Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. While there has been a decline in the incidence of child labour in few states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Orissa and Tamil Nadu, there has been an increase in Bihar, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Share of Workers (6-17 years) in the respective total population in the all the states of India are presented in table 1.

Table 1: State-wise Distribution of Working Children of 6-14 years during 1981-2011

Sl. No.	Name of the State/UT	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	Andhra Pradesh	627492	1951312	1661940	1363339
2	Assam *	239349	**	327598	351416
3	Bihar	1059359	1101764	942245	1117500
4	Gujarat	518061	616913	523585	485530
5	Haryana	137826	194189	109691	253491

Sl. No.	Name of the State/UT	1981	1991	2001	2011
6	Himachal Pradesh	71384	99624	56438	107774
7	Jammu & Kashmir	70489	258437	**	175630
8	Karnataka	808719	1131530	976247	822615
9	Kerala	111801	92854	34800	26156
10	Madhya Pradesh	1112319	1698597	1352563	1065259
11	Maharashtra	988357	1557756	1068427	764075
12	Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	364572
13	Manipur	16380	20217	16493	28836
14	Meghalaya	30440	44916	34633	53940
15	Jharkhand	-	-	-	407200
16	Uttaranchal	-	-	-	70183
17	Nagaland	13726	16235	16467	45874
18	Orissa	492477	702293	452394	377594
19	Punjab	232774	216939	142868	177268
20	Rajasthan	587389	819605	774199	1262570
21	Sikkim	15661	8561	5598	16457
22	Tamil Nadu	713305	975055	578889	418801
23	Tripura	17490	24204	16478	21756
24	Uttar Pradesh	1326726	1434675	1410086	1927997
25	West Bengal	511443	605263	711691	857087
26	Andaman & Nicobar Island	572	1309	1265	1960
27	Arunachal Pradesh	17925	17950	12395	18482
28	Chandigarh	1086	1986	1870	3779
29	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3102	3615	4416	4274
30	Delhi	17120	25717	27351	41899
31	Daman and Diu	7391	9378	941	729
32	Goa	-	-	4656	4138
33	Lakshadweep	97	56	34	27
34	Mizoram	***	6314	16411	26265
35	Pondicherry	3725	3606	2680	1904
Total		10753985	13640870	11285349	12666377

Source: Child Labour Facts & Figures: An Analysis of Census 2011 / International Labour Office, Geneva, 2011.

The Registrar General of Census has recently provided occupation-wise data of children in this age group working in the non-agricultural sector. Though the classification of occupations in the Census data is not exactly matching with the occupations listed as hazardous under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, a tentative segregation of data into hazardous and non-hazardous occupations has been done to enable us to have

a broad estimation of children working in different occupations. As per this data, 36.43 lakh children in the age group of 6-14 years are working in non-agricultural sector in the country, out of which 12.19 lakh children are working in hazardous occupations. Their distribution in some major hazardous occupations is given the Table 2.

Table 2: Number of child workers (6-14 years) engaged in hazardous occupations in 2011

Sl. No.	Name of the Hazardous Occupation	Number of child workers
1	Pan, Bidi and Cigarettes	252574
2	Construction	208833
3	Domestic workers*	185505
4	Spinning/ weaving	128984
5	Spinning/ weaving	128984
6	Brick-kilns, tiles	84972
7	Dhabas/ Restaurants/ Hotels/ Motels*	70934
8	Auto-workshop, vehicle repairs	49893
9	Gem-cutting, Jewellery	37489
10	Carpet-making	32647
11	Ceramic	18894

12	Agarbati, Dhoop and Detergent making	13583
13	Others	135162
Total		1219470

*Ministry has recently issued notification to include children working as domestic workers and in dhabas/restaurants, hotels etc. in the list of hazardous occupations w.e.f. 10th October 2006.

Source: Report of the Working Group on Child Labour for the 12th Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, p.5.

However, the total number of children (aged 6 to 17) engaged in some forms of economic activity world over remains awfully high at 352 million. Of these, some 106 million are engaged in works acceptable for children who have reached the minimum age for employment (usually 15 years) or in light work such as household chores or work undertaken as part of a child's education (ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138). The remaining 246 million children are involved in child labour that needs to be abolished forthwith. These forms prominently include work performed by a child under the minimum age specified for a particular kind of work by national legislation or international standards, hazardous work that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or the conditions in which it is performed and "Unconditional" heinous forms of child labour as defined in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, No. 182.

Irrespective of what is shown in the official statistics, we say that the phenomenon of child labour is significant because, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is a legislation to address hazardous industrial child labour in a limited way as the purview of the Act covers only the organized sectors of production. As it is inbuilt in the law, this Act has excluded a vast section of toiling children in the unorganized sectors, as over 90 percent of the labour force in India is accounted for by the unorganized sectors of production. The political weight behind the initiatives towards government legal intervention has been very dissimilar across states of India. Generally under the era of globalization and liberalization policies, the underlying attitude of the government is not to strictly impose labour laws that will disturb the production process.

Nature and Extent of Child Labour

Child Labour abolition has become part of developmental process at National and International level. Still, in this modern world, it is becoming an abuse of child and the human rights in third world countries including India. Child Labour has direct relation with poverty, health, trade, education, adult unemployment, human development and over all development of the society. The issue of the Child Labour has been linked with human rights, educational development, International relationship and National pride.

In recent past a large number of National and International initiatives had been taken up to combat the problem of Child Labour through enrolling the children in to schools. The problem of Child Labour was basically an outcome of the industrial revolution in many of the

countries including developing societies. During the post- industrial revolution period Child Labour became a growing phenomenon up to the first half of the 20th century in the industrial countries. The problem of Child Labour has become serious among the developing countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia and Myanmar.

UNO estimate states that, there are 246 million child labourers in various countries of the world. Asian continent is possessing nearly 2/3rd of all child labourer in the world. Indian sub-continent has a dubious distinction of having largest number of child labour of all the countries. Almost 25 per cent of world child labourer is found in Latin American countries. About only 1 per cent child labourer are living in United States, Europe and other developed countries. More than half of the estimated child labourers in the world are found working in hazardous nature of activities. In Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand children below 15 rarely work in commercial agriculture because of the effective enforcement of laws passed in first half of the 20th century. In less developed countries millions of children as young as 9-10 years still are toiling in quarries, mines, factories, fields and service enterprises. They make up for more than 10 per cent in much of the labour force in some countries in the Middle-East and 2 to 10 per cent in much of Latin America and parts of Asia.

As per 2011 census, children in the age group of 0-14 years constituted about 360 million and accounted to be 35.3 per cent of total population. The 2001 census estimated child labour to be 12.7 million in the country, exceeding the estimates of 1991 (11.3 million). The Child Labour are found working in agriculture, small industries, household industries, road side restaurants, tea stalls and shops, construction sites and sometimes in factories. Similarly Table 2.3 and 2.4 explain the magnitude of the Child Labor in various states in India. Similarly, out of school children accounted to be 17.9 per cent of child population. There is sharp decline in the number of child labour over the last decades in our country. Hence, 2004-05 estimates show that, the number of Child Labour has declined in major states in India (Table 2). The total number of out of school children has drastically declined between 2001 and 2006.

Andhra Pradesh was having a dubious distinction of having largest number of Child Labor in India but declined very fast in recent years. In rural and urban areas of Uttar Pradesh is concentrated with Child Labour in India. The total number of Child Labour comes to

20,79,000 followed by Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chattisgarh. Least number of Child Labour is found in Goa, Delhi and Kerala. Eleven districts in India having each more than eighty five thousand Child

Labour are identified (Table 3) including three in such districts (Guntur, Kurnool and Mahabubnagar) in Andhra Pradesh. All the eleven districts with high incidence of child labour in the country are found in six states in the country.

Table 3: Magnitude of Child Labour in India 2011 Top (11 districts having more than 85,000 Child Labour)

State	District	No. of Child Labour
Rajasthan	Alwar	140318
Andhra Pradesh	Mahabub Nagar*	138475
Andhra Pradesh	Kurnool*	138326
Karnataka	Gulbarga	99914
Rajasthan	Jalor	99109
Madhya Pradesh	Jhabua	96643
West Bengal	Medinapur	95739
Andhra Pradesh	Guntur*	92075
West Bengal	Maldah	88556
West Bengal	Murshidabad	87968
Uttar Pradesh	Bulandshahr	85296

Source: Compiled from 2011 Census Data

* Selected for the Present Study

As many as 367 districts (72.96 per cent) have shown increase in Child Labour between 2001 and 2011 census. Only 136 districts have shown a decline in the magnitude of Child Labour. The increase is alarming in Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh states. The tables 1.5 and 1.6 explain the sectoral distribution and child work participation rates in India. According to NSSO estimates 68.14 percentage of Child Labour is working in agriculture followed by manufacturing and trade and hotels in India. The percentage of Child

Labour engaged in agriculture is still high in the States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Rajasthan and Orissa. It is found very low in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This can be attributed to the social development activities initiated in early 1980's in the southern states, in continuation with British rule. The population of Child Labour engaged in manufacturing is high in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal as compared to many other states in India (Table 4).

Table 4 : Sectoral Distribution of India's Child Labour (2010-11)

State	Agri	Mining & Quar	Mfg.	Elect. Water	Const Trade	Hotel	Transport	Finance	Com. Soc	Total
A.P.	68.96	0.96	9.70	0.00	3.20	9.02	1.05	0.00	7.11	100
Assam	69.26	1.78	8.42	0.00	1.78	7.76	0.05	0.00	10.96	100
Bihar	71.84	0.00	11.16	0.00	0.00	15.49	0.07	0.38	1.05	100
Delhi	0.00	0.00	11.08	0.00	0.00	57.83	0.00	0.00	31.09	100
Gujarat	76.69	1.04	2.58	0.00	0.28	17.77	0.16	0.00	1.48	100
H.P.	87.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.71	1.21	0.00	4.66	100
Haryana	65.57	0.00	3.81	0.00	7.03	8.08	0.00	0.00	15.51	100
Karnataka	82.60	0.22	9.27	0.00	1.19	5.73	0.70	0.00	0.30	100
Kerala	19.22	0.00	32.78	0.00	0.00	31.95	0.00	0.00	16.05	100
M.P.	82.89	0.00	9.93	0.00	1.50	4.33	0.00	0.00	1.34	100
Maharashtra	82.62	0.00	5.34	0.00	1.92	5.75	0.13	0.14	4.09	100
Odissa	73.18	0.88	17.36	0.00	3.25	3.34	0.91	0.00	1.08	100
Punjab	67.91	0.00	12.71	0.00	1.16	7.21	2.59	0.00	8.43	100
Rajasthan	75.78	0.00	9.60	0.19	2.94	7.26	0.05	3.74	0.44	100
T.N.	39.49	0.00	44.55	0.00	5.91	5.68	1.54	0.16	2.68	100
U.P.	61.24	0.00	25.34	0.00	0.40	9.73	0.68	0.50	2.11	100
W.B.	34.57	0.00	43.93	0.00	3.27	9.66	1.19	0.80	6.59	100
India	68.14	0.25	16.55	0.02	1.95	8.45	0.66	0.57	3.41	100

Source: Estimated from Unit Level Records of NSSO, 2010-11

As per the report of working group on Child Labour for the Eleventh five year plan, Uttar Pradesh ranked first with 19,27,997 Child Labour followed by Madhya Pradesh (13,65,259), Andhra Pradesh (13,63,339), Rajasthan (12,62,570), Bihar (11,17,500), West Bengal (8,57,087), Karnataka (8,22,615) and Jarkhand (4,07,200). Similarly, there are 12,19,470 child workers engaged in hazardous occupations like pan, beedi, construction, domestic works, spinning/wearing, brick-kiln tiles, dhabas, auto workshops, zeri, diamond cutting, Jewellery, carpet making, ceramics, agarbathi and other products and services as per the 2011 censuses. In spite of massive level of financial resources spent on social development during last 50 years, the problem of Child Labour is still alarming.

CONCLUSION

Most children who work do not have the power of free choice. They are not choosing between career options with varying advantages, drawbacks and levels of pay. A fortunate minority have sufficient material means behind them to be pulled towards work as an attractive option offering them even more economic advantages. But the vast majority are pushed into work that is often damaging to their development by three key factors: the exploitation of poverty, the absence of education, and the restrictions of tradition.

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