



Child Labour: A Case Study Of West Bengal

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Abstract:

The incidence of child labour is still very high in many less developed countries. India with all her richness and wealth is not free from this problem. The absence of a process of equitable distribution of the fruits of development along with the existence of abject poverty among a large section of the people of the country often stand on the way to the reduction of child labour from the economy. In India, according to Census, 2001, there are about 1.26 crore child labourers. They constitute 4.5 percent of the total child population (age 5-14 years) of India. About 8.57 lakh child labourers belong to the State of West Bengal i.e., they form about 7 percent of the total child workforce of the country. According to the Planning Commission, 2007, about 12.2 lakh children in India are engaged in hazardous occupations i.e., about 10 percent of the total working children. They are getting very little opportunity to attend school even for basic education. The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, has given special effort at present to overcome the problems of child labour and educate child workers after enrolling them in the special schools approved under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP). This paper aims at analyzing the nature and status of education of the child labourers in West Bengal.

KEY WORDS:

Child , Labour , Rights ,Stipend,Health ,Education.

1.INTRODUCTION

The term Child Labor is used for employment of children below a certain age, which is considered illegal by law and custom. The stipulated age varies from country to country and government to government. Child labor is a world phenomenon which is considered exploitative and inhuman by many international organizations.

Child Labor began to be considered a human rights issue and became an issue of public dispute, when the foundation of universal schooling was laid. Historically the transformation came with the industrial revolution and the emergence of concepts like children's rights and worker's right's. Child labor is widely prevalent in some form or the other, all over the world. The term is used for domestic work, factory work, agriculture, mining, quarrying, having own work or business' like selling food etc, helping parent's business and doing odd jobs. Children are regularly employed to guide tourists, sometimes doubling up as a marketing force to bring in business for shop owners and other business establishment. In some industries children are forced to do repetitive and tedious work like weaving carpets, assembling boxes, polishing shoes, cleaning and arranging shops goods. It is seen that children are found working more in the informal sectors compared to factories and commercial registered organizations. Little children are often seen selling in the streets or working quietly on domestic chores within the high walls of homes – hidden away from the eyes of the media and labor inspectors.

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According to the statistics given by International Labor Organization there are about 218 million children between the age of 5 and 17 working all over the world. The figure excludes domestic labor. The most condemned form of child labor is the use of children for military purpose and child prostitution. Child agricultural works, child singers and child actors outside of school hours during season time are more acceptable by champions of human rights and law. The phenomenon of child labor is a complex development issue worthy of investigation. The fact that vulnerable children are being exploited and forced into work, which is not fit for their age, is a human rights concern now. India and other developed and developing countries are really plagued by the problem of child employment in organized and unorganized sectors.

Most countries of the world consider it highly inappropriate when a child below a certain age is put to work. However, the minimum age at which a human can be put to work differs from country to country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study are-

- (1) To study its present situation and dimension.
- (2) To analyze the cause and background of the problem.
- (3) To identify the possible strategies for human development.
- (4) To ensure proper planning and management measures.

LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA

West Bengal is on the eastern bottleneck of India, stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south.



DATASOURCE

This work is based on primary data obtained from Questionnaire survey, interview, field visit and secondary data is obtained from Government and Non-Government office. Important places have been

visited. Relevant photographs have been taken in support of the facts stated in the literature. Various maps have been collected in order to fulfill the objective of the research.

METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE

Methodology for the present work is statistical as well as cartographic. For analyzing this data, statistical techniques have been adopted to fulfill this objective.

DATABASE

Table: showing the statistics of child labour in West Bengal.

STATE	1971	1981	1991	2001
West Bengal	511443	605263	711691	857087

SOURCE: CENSUS, 2001

SOME PICTURES RELATED TO CHILD LABOUR IN WEST BENGAL



STRATEGY TO COMBAT CHILD LABOUR ISSUE**Stipend**

In the existing arrangement, the stipend of Rs. 100/- per child per month was being disbursed every month. As per the revised scheme, the monthly stipend of Rs. 100/- per month per child will be disbursed only after the child is successfully mainstreamed into formal system of schooling. Till that period, the amount of stipend will be regularly deposited in the Bank Account of the child. The accumulated stipend amount could be handed over to the child at the time of her/his getting mainstreamed.

Nutrition

The amount for provision of nutrition to the children in the special schools has been doubled from Rs. 2.50/- per child per day to Rs. 5/- per child per day.

Health Component

In the existing scheme, there was no separate budgetary provision for any health component to take care of the health-related aspects of the children. In the revised scheme an amount of honorarium (Rs. 5,000/- per month for one doctor for every 20 schools) has been provided to put in place an institutionalized mechanism for regular and periodical effective health care of the children by a doctor. A health card in respect of every child also needs to be maintained with all the necessary entries.

Vocational Training

In the existing scheme, there was no separate budgetary provision for the services of any Master Trainer for imparting training to the children/teachers. In the revised scheme, budgetary provision (Rs. 5,000/- for one Master Trainer for each NCLP) has been provided to hire the services of a Master for each NCLP.

Training for Educational Teachers

In the existing scheme, there was no separate budgetary provision for providing training to the educational teachers. In the revised scheme, budgetary provision has been provided to impart training to the teachers twice during the 10th Plan period.

Survey

In the revised Scheme, provision (Rs. 2.75 lakh per survey) has been made to conduct surveys of working children two times during the 10th Plan period.

By following the strategy enunciated above and combining this with the existing established mechanisms of enforcement, it is expected that a drastic reduction in child labour would result by the end of Plan period.

The problem of child labour requires to be dealt through sustained efforts over a period of time. Government is committed to the goal of eradication of child labour in all its forms. Considering the nature and magnitude of the problem a gradual and sequential approach has been adopted to withdraw and rehabilitate child labour beginning with the children working in hazardous occupations.

CONCLUSION

Poverty and lack of social security are the main causes of child labour. The increasing gap between the rich and the poor, privatization of basic services and the neo-liberal economic policies are causes major sections of the population out of employment and without basic needs. This adversely affects children more than any other group. Entry of multi-national corporations into industry without proper mechanisms to hold them accountable has lead to the use of child labour. Lack of quality universal education has also contributed to children dropping out of school and entering the labour force. A major concern is that the actual number of child labourers goes un-detected. Laws that are meant to protect children from hazardous labour are ineffective and not implemented correctly.

A growing phenomenon is using children as domestic workers in urban areas. The conditions in

which children work is completely unregulated and they are often made to work without food, and very low wages, resembling situations of slavery. There are cases of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of child domestic workers. The argument for domestic work is often that families have placed their children in these homes for care and employment. There has been a recent notification by the Ministry of Labour making child domestic work as well as employment of children in dhabas, tea stalls and restaurants "hazardous" occupations.

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